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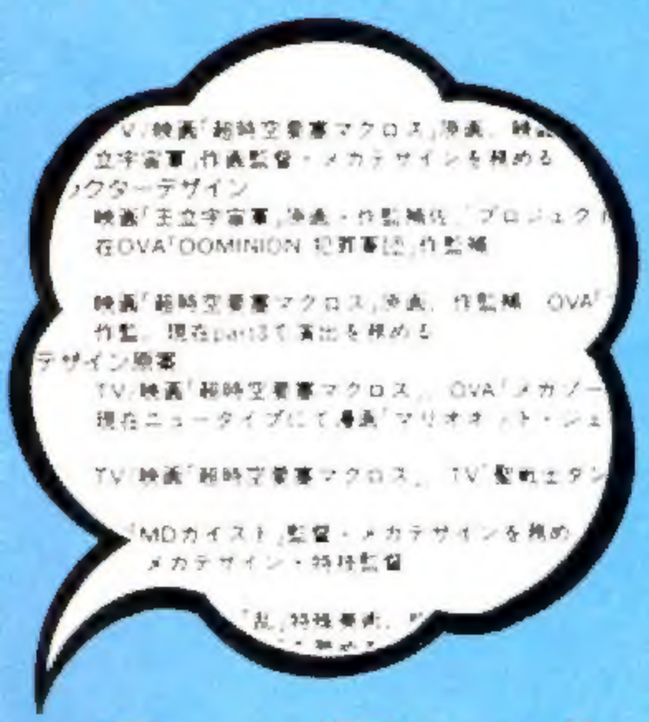

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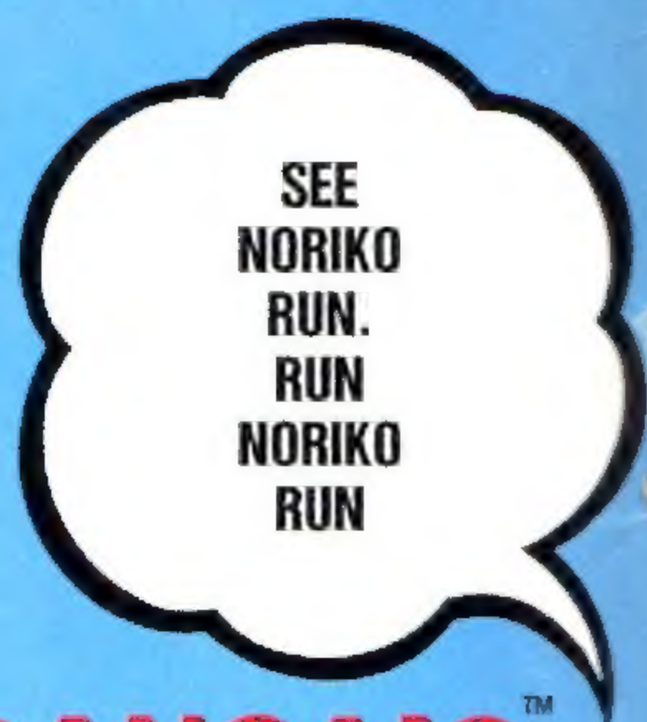

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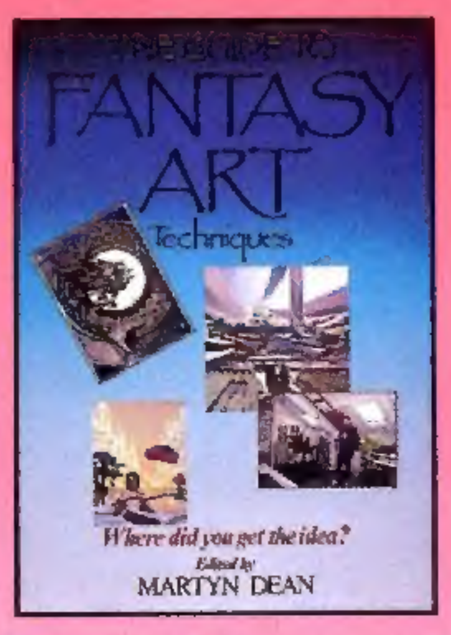

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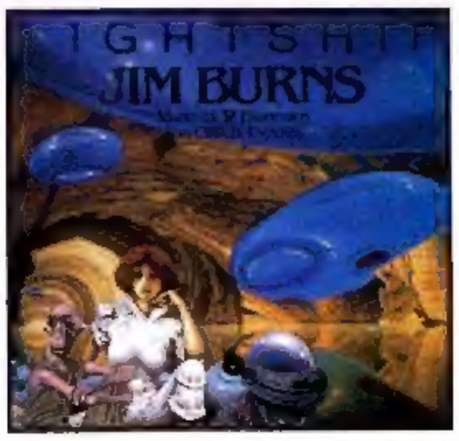

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WORD BALLOONS

At Long Last, List

It's a labor of love, that list at the end of every issue of COMICS SCENE. I'm sure you've seen it—personally, it's my very favorite part of the magazine, my pride and joy. It's the Comics Screen list. And every issue, it details the progress (if any) of all those comics/pulp/cartoon characters bound for movies, TV, Broadway and elsewhere. Mostly, it's blue sky and smoke and mirrors tinged with a dash of hopefulness and a bit of dread.

I've been keeping such a list (and checking it twice) for a while. Not an awfully long time. Only 17 years.

It seems like only yesterday when I began, logging in projects to assist in the writing of media news columns and newsletters I did in the mid-70s for several fanzines: Larry Johnson's *The Comet*, Rod Snyder's *Unreal* and *Esgaroth Express* and Kurt Erichsen's *Endeavor*. In 1975, I took the act to what is now the *Comic Buyers' Guide*, the weekly bible to comics fandom (then published & edited by Alan Light, now edited by Don & Maggie Thompson), where I kept track of comics projects as an ongoing part of my column, *Media Report*. In the early '80s, I did the same thing while at *Prevue* (still edited & published by legendary comics writer/artist Jim Steranko). And now, every issue, here I am and so's that list, constantly revised and updated (sometimes daily), still haunting me. Like some Egyptian curse or Canadian mountie, I'm beginning to think I'll never escape it.

The list is growing steadily, two or three inches an issue. And this is despite our best efforts at condensing information and deleting those projects finally deemed "dead." This increase has been constant, even before *Batman*'s smash success. Now, comics are even hotter and like the Amazing Colossal Man, the list is growing larger and quickly.

Will all these projects be made? Absolutely not. Will all the projects that *do* get made actually get released to theaters or video or air actually be good? Nope. It would be nice if that was the way the world worked, but it doesn't. Some, experience teaches us, will *not* be the best thing since sliced bread. Unfortunately, it's all but impossible to know in advance what will work and what won't. It's only educated guesswork based on the track record of the creators involved, the judgment of our writer(s) covering the project and the photos (which can be great even if the movie's lousy).

Let me underline one thing: All of those projects listed will *not* get made. They're "in development," the nebulous realm which lies somewhere between creation and reality. I note this because we do get a constant stream of letters, inquiring as to just when readers might see the *Wolverine*, *Green Lantern* and *The Shadow* films. To which I must answer, "Don't hold your breath. It may not be in our lifetimes. "

Look at *The Shadow*, a personal favorite of mine. When (if?) it gets made, I'm given to understand the *Shadow* pulp magazine novels (written mostly by Walter Gibson) will probably be reactivated and resume paperback publication. Know when production of this project (which is *still* not dead) was originally announced? May 1980.

Are there realities on that list? Absolutely! As you can see this issue, the live-action *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (to premiere March 30) and *Captain America* (April 6) are due shortly. Waiting in the wings are *Boris & Natasha* (also April) and *Dick Tracy* (June). And waiting in limbo are *The Punisher* (made, not yet theatrically released, possibly for video) and *Brenda Starr* (made, being shown on airplanes, probably a video entry sometime). Furthermore, it seems all but certain that *Spider-Man*, *Sgt. Rock* and *Batman II will* be made, that *Annie* will open on Broadway and that a new superhero TV series will debut this fall or next.

Will they all be good? Nope. But I can tell you this: They'll all be on that little list.

—David McDonnell/Editor

COMICS SCENE RETURNS with a look behind-the-scenes at the (screen) writing of **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**. Plus, there's even more that we haven't figured out yet (we were on vacation). See the surprises in **COMICS SCENE #13, on sale Thursday, April 24, 1990.**

COMICS SCENE

All Wet?

It was his idea to give the incredible Hulk not only a more diabolical edge but a job as a Las Vegas bouncer, his decision to have the Phantom fight evil in the concrete jungles of Manhattan, and, in his novels, his invention to have Arthur Pendragon run for office in modern America and to have a wolf transform into a human being with each rising of the full moon. However, Peter David refuses to take any credit for *The Atlantis Chronicles*, the seven-part mini-series he and artist Esteban Maroto have labored on for DC. After all, he insists, nearly every word of it is based on fact.

"A professor at Golden Bell University up in Ithaca, New York, Professor R.K. Simpson, approached DC Comics with what is quite possibly the most important find since the Dead Sea Scrolls," David explains. "Namely, what he had come upon, through means that he did not specify, were a number of volumes of authentic Atlantean history written by authentic Atlanteans thousands of years ago. He had wanted to have them published as non-fiction, but he couldn't make anybody believe that these things were actually non-fiction, so he brought them to DC because he figured that perhaps the comic audience would be interested and that DC would treat it with a certain degree of respect.

With only the few Atlantean sketches Professor Simpson has discovered to guide him, "Esteban Maroto has done some tremendous work," says David.

The Atlantis Chronicles is given to Albart the historian to write, a task repeated today by Peter David.

HERE IS THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF OFFICIAL VOLUMES OF THE LAND OF ATLANTIS AND THIS, HER GREATEST CITY, POSEIDONUS. THE PAGES ARE BLANK. WHAT THEY WILL SAY IS UP TO YOU.
THANK YOU, MY LIEGE.
Atlantis Chronicles Art: Esteban Maroto/Trademark & Copyright 1989 DC Comics Inc.

SO BEGAN THE CONSTRUCTION OF POSEIDONUS, THE GREATEST CITY OF ATLANTIS.
THE CONSTRUCTION WOULD TAKE LONG MONTHS, DURING THAT TIME OUR TOUCH PROTECTIVE MEASURES...

"Fortunately, actual Atlantean history is filled with adventure, betrayals, sex, romance, triumph, tragedy, all kinds of things that we feel will make terrific reading. It starts off with the story of two brothers. One of them is the ruler, whose name is Orin, the other is Shalako, the spiritual advisor, and the story stems from first their alliance and then eventually their split, which results in not only the two cities of Atlantis, but also the two races: the Poseidonians, who are two-legged, and the Tritonians, who are the basis for what have come to be known as mermen and mermaids. The first issue deals with the sinking of Atlantis, and the second with their trying to adapt to underwater life. The third issue deals with the offspring of characters introduced in the first issue and so on; it's a generational saga."

It's also a view of the sunken continent that bears a remarkable resemblance to the one DC has provided for years. "Yes, that's one of the things that Dick Giordano was ecstatic about, that [Professor Simpson's work] will prove once and for all DC's depiction of Atlantis is the correct one," David acknowledges. "That's probably one of the reasons that Professor Simpson approached DC rather than Marvel since, unfortunately, it turns out that Prince Namor [see page 25] is, in fact, a fictional character as opposed to Orin and Shalako and all the others who are *real*."

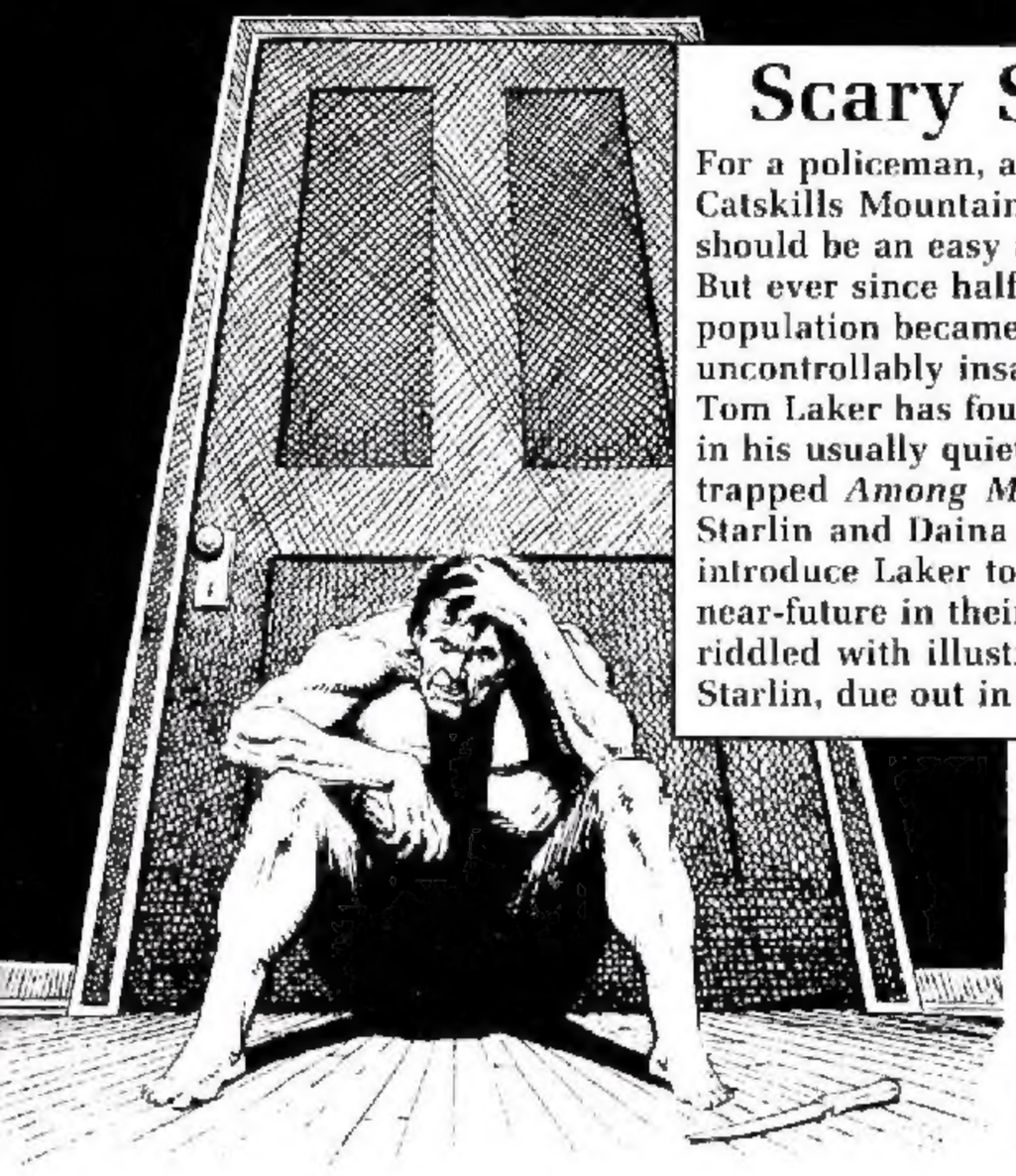
And thanks to that similarity, David has been able to take a few liberties with the material, inserting passing references to Arion, one-time Lord of Atlantis, and a cameo by Lori Lemaris' love, Ronal, as well as several revelations about Aquaman's origin, into the otherwise (apparently) factual epic.

"It answers many questions," David says, "like just why is blonde hair such a big deal in Atlantis? Who *is* Aquaman's father? All these things become answered in *The Atlantis Chronicles*, and I'm excited because I think it's some of the best writing I've ever done. Fortunately, I had tremendous source material to draw from. Each issue does, in fact, say, 'Transcribed and adapted by Peter David,' since we did want to give Professor Simpson his due.

"After spending a good year-and-a-half of my life plunging into this, so to speak, I am now utterly convinced that there was indeed an Atlantis. There's too much historical base for there not to have been. For example, the volumes Professor Simpson found, in addition to tying in nicely to DC continuity, also tie in with one of the first mentions of Atlantis that we actually have, which is from Plato's *Dialogues*, in which he describes an Atlantean attack across all the known continents many thousands of years ago. That attack is depicted in *Atlantis Chronicles* issues #5-7."

Remarks the writer, "I don't think anything in comics like this has ever been seen before."

—Daniel Dickholtz



Art: By & Courtesy Jim Starlin

Scary Stuff

For a policeman, a tiny Catskills Mountains town should be an easy assignment. But ever since half the Earth's population became uncontrollably insane, Officer Tom Laker has found that even in his usually quiet hamlet he's trapped *Among Madmen*. Jim Starlin and Daina Graziunas introduce Laker to this hellish near-future in their first novel, riddled with illustrations by Starlin, due out in April.

Tom Corbett Art: Fred Perry/Ter Pallot/Copyright 1989 Wade Williams Productions

Star Pupil

Four decades ago, *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet* attended his first classes at the Solar Alliance's Space Academy, taking up battles with alien attackers as an extracurricular activity. And while anyone else with his record would have graduated with high honors by now, Tom and his classmates, perhaps because the eyes of the world followed their every movement on their new TV screens, never managed to find the time to study for their final exams. But thanks to their new tutors, writer Bill Spangler and artist Fred Perry, the space cadets have another chance to test themselves, this time in a four-issue mini-series from Eternity.

"The characters are one of the big strengths of *Tom Corbett*," notes Spangler, himself a fan of the '50s video star since he discovered the young hero's exploits in a series of novels authored under the pseudonym of Carey Rockwell. "They're very strongly defined, almost in the way that Kirk, Spock and McCoy are defined in *Star Trek*. Astro is the computer whiz and kind of fannish in the 20th century sense because he's very much involved with this holographic role-playing game called *Space Barbarians*. Roger Manning is cynical and pragmatic; he's in there because he likes to go fast and shoot things. And Tom is the explorer; he's out there to find out what's out there rather than being out there to be a military officer."

Yet while time may not have changed the fact that these young adventurers "are very colorful and interesting people," Spangler admits that other aspects of the series have had to be modified for modern audiences. For example, although Perry has retooled and upgraded rockets once capable of reaching the stars, Spangler is "keeping the comics in the Solar System as much as possible, and I'm going to try and use what I can of current knowledge about the Solar System. As for the characters, while people are still calling Astro that, I've given him a normal name too, Linc Deever; Astro is his character's name in this role-playing game. There was a female character in the original series named Joan Dale who's listed sometimes as Tom's girl friend, but she was a teacher at the Academy. In the '50s, you could talk about a relationship between a teacher and a student and nobody would think anything untoward about it. What I've done is make Joan a cadet in order to have more of a presence of women at the Academy and there'll be a bit of a rivalry between Joan and Tom like the ones in *Cheers* and *Moonlighting*."

The 24th century students' first assignment was to prevent a mammoth creature, one capable of surviving in the airless void of space, from committing suicide in Earth's skies. "The second issue is the beginning of a three-parter about the return of Tom's father who vanished in space when Tom was six or seven years old. Now he's allied with an alien race and the questions are what do the aliens really want, and is Tom's father still human?"

—Daniel Dickholtz

TOMORROW: GRAND FINALE
KOMBAT ZONE
DETROIT STEEL vs NY SLAM
ALAN GRANT WRITER
LEE SULLIVAN PENCILER
KIM DEMULDER INKER
STEVE WHITE COLORIST
FRAGGIN' K! IT'S SOME KINDA MACHINE!
PART MACHINE, CREEP. ALSO PART MAN AND THE PART YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR--
ALL COP!
I DON'T CARE WHAT HE IS. THE FRAGGER OWES ME A HAND! BLOW HIM AWAY!

RoboCop Character: Copyright 1990 Orion Pictures

RoboCop Art: Lee Sullivan/Kim DeMulder/Courtesy Marvel

Buy This Or There'll Be...Trouble

With another *RoboCop* movie co-written by Frank Miller coming this summer, Marvel Comics has decided to give the cyborg sentinel a regular beat to pound. Duty officers Alan Grant, Lee Sullivan and Kim DeMulder have already assigned him to investigate possible criminal activities at OCP's rival, Nixco, but on upcoming shifts, he'll be going after dinosaurs and even an experimental, renegade Robo. Wouldn't you buy that for a dollar fifty?

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With Splinter in tow, Raphael, Donatello, Michaelangelo and Leonardo are on their way to screen stardom.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Movie Stars

They may have faced the Shredder, but one studio exec wondered why they should ever face the cameras.

By WILL MURRAY

Golden Harvest's LA-based Executive in Charge of Production Tom Gray is an enthusiastic promoter of his company's forthcoming live-action film based on Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. But he can remember a time not so long ago, when he had an entirely different reaction to the project.

"I had commissioned Bobby Herbeck, a Hollywood writer and stand-up comic, to do a script for me called *Department Store*," Gray recalls. "He had a friend, Kim Dawson, currently head of production for *The Mickey Mouse Club* in Orlando. Bobby said Kim has this totally wacko thing called *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, and I said, 'Bobby, forget it. The title alone turns me completely off. I just don't want to know about it.' And mind you, I had never even heard of the comics or ninja toys or anything. I said, 'Look, let's *not* waste time. I can't sell this to my people in Hong Kong. They'll remove me from the position.' "

The idea of a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles movie actually originated with Dawson's partner, Gary Proper, who manages the comedian Gallagher. Proper discovered *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* comics while on the road with Gallagher. After receiving three months of persistent phone calls, Tom Gray reluctantly consented to meet with Dawson and Proper in July 1988.

"We had a lunch and we talked about a hundred different things, none of which was *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*," Gray says. "Finally, at the end of the meeting, he said, 'Take a look at this comic book,' and I said, 'Guys, look. I'm into making big pictures. I've got other stuff.' As I was leaving, I kind of thumbed through one of Kevin and Peter's books and it just grabbed me right there. I said, 'Wait a minute! I can do this! I can make this in Hong Kong in our studios. I can put Chinese stuntmen in

Although the idea was brought up, it was decided *not* to go with star voices for the Turtles. Sorry, no Jack Nicholson as Michaelangelo.

these things and knock this off for $2 million.' "

The next step was to secure the rights. Gray flew to Eastman and Laird's Mirage Studios in Northampton, Massachusetts for a conference.

"We got on very well," according to Gray, "but they were concerned that we were going to make this a cheap and cheeky type picture."

After allaying Eastman and Laird's initial fears, Gray next put Herbeck to work writing the screenplay and went in search of a director. He was most taken with music video director Steve Barron, who had worked with Jim Henson on *The Storyteller*. But, Barron wanted his partner, Simon Fields, involved in the production. This led to another meeting where still another direction emerged.

"They were very enthusiastic about the project," Gray recalls. "They said they could bring a lot to the table, and asked, 'Why don't we approach Jim Henson?' And I said, 'Here we go. This is going to cost a fortune.' So, they went back to Henson's people at Creature Shop, and lo and behold, it didn't turn out to be as expensive as I had anticipated. That was really the origin of the picture."

Henson got very, very enthusiastic about it," Gray says. "Of course, he doesn't do anything he doesn't believe in because he doesn't need it. We had to give Henson at least six months to come up with the characters from scratch. We just said, 'Here is the comic book, guys. We don't want to see wires hanging out of these things. We want to make this absolutely lifelike. We have to sell the Turtles as totally humanistic. They've got to be mobile. You've got to shoot them in a master shot where they are seen with no wires.' They scratched their heads and said, 'We don't think we can do it because with all the wiring, the heads alone are going to look as big as a TV set.' So, they thought about it and they came up with the technology."

The filmmakers are being closed-mouthed about the actual workings of the Turtle creatures, but Gray is willing to talk in generalities. "There are six new technological advances in animatronics," he explains. "Essentially, the Turtles are controlled by remote computers, radio signals and servo-motors. And they are life-size in stature."

A year after the project was green-lighted—after Gray went through several aborted deals with major studios

If Raphael survives his meeting with the Foot, he'll take the spotlight as the romantic lead entangled in a triangle with Casey Jones and April O'Neil.

until hooking up with New Line Cinema's distribution arm—filming began on the former De Laurentiis studio complex in Wilmington, North Carolina in July 1989.

The Turtles themselves will be played by unknown actors whose voices will be dubbed in during post-production.

"All along, my concept was the Turtles are the stars," Gray says. "Originally, Gallagher wanted to play one of the Turtles, and get John Candy or Chevy Chase. And I said, 'I'm not having this. The meeting is over.' I want to sell *the Turtles*. I believe in the Turtle concept and I don't want to have people say, 'Hey, wasn't Chevy good as Donatello?' It happened to be exactly in sync with what Kevin and Peter wanted. They wanted to keep their creation individual, and not have some actor taking over their characteristics.

"They are very gifted," Gray says of his anonymous Turtles actors. "Many of them are mimes. You can imagine being strapped into about 60 pounds of latex with motors. They lose body weight, but they've held up pretty well. We've gone over backwards to make our actors feel their role is im-

All Turtles Photos: Alan Markfield © 1990 New Line Cinema

Turtles Characters Trademark & Copyright 1988, 1989, 1990 Mirage Studios

"Splinter is the most remarkable character of all," comments studio exec Tom Gray about the Turtles' Jim Henson Creature Shop-created sensei, here caught in one of Shredder's rat traps.

portant because when the cameras are on them, they can't look like a bunch of green basketballs."

Gray is adamant that the Turtles' movie voices will *not* be chosen to emulate the popular *TMNT* animated series. Older, but equally distinctive, voices will be created for each part.

"We completely stayed away from the cartoon," he notes. "I don't want to satisfy the cartoon people, I want to satisfy the comic-book people. We took our story from meeting with Kevin and Peter, looking through their books and getting a sense of what kind of characters these things were, and getting inside Peter and Kevin's heads to see how they saw it."

Eastman and Laird had oversight from outline to the original Bobby Herbeck screenplay through to the final draft by Todd W. (*The Wonder Years*) Langen.

As for the human side of the cast, they will be the familiar crew from the comic book. The spoof nature of the original comic will be downplayed, however.

"We had to go completely orthodox and do a movie," Gray explains. "We stayed with Kevin and Peter's original characters—Casey, April, the Turtles, Splinter, Shredder, the Foot clan. We felt that because it was not that well-known with older audiences, we had better go back and tell the backstory of how the Turtles were formed. We do it in a very stylized way in a flash-back sequence, somewhat dreamy—which is part of the film's style. The way it has been photographed has a subterranean look. We open it up when we get into New York. But even in the books, the Turtles aren't walking down Fifth Avenue that much. They live in this underworld and they carry out their good deeds from underground.'

The storyline, while borrowing from Eastman and Laird, isn't a strict adaptation.

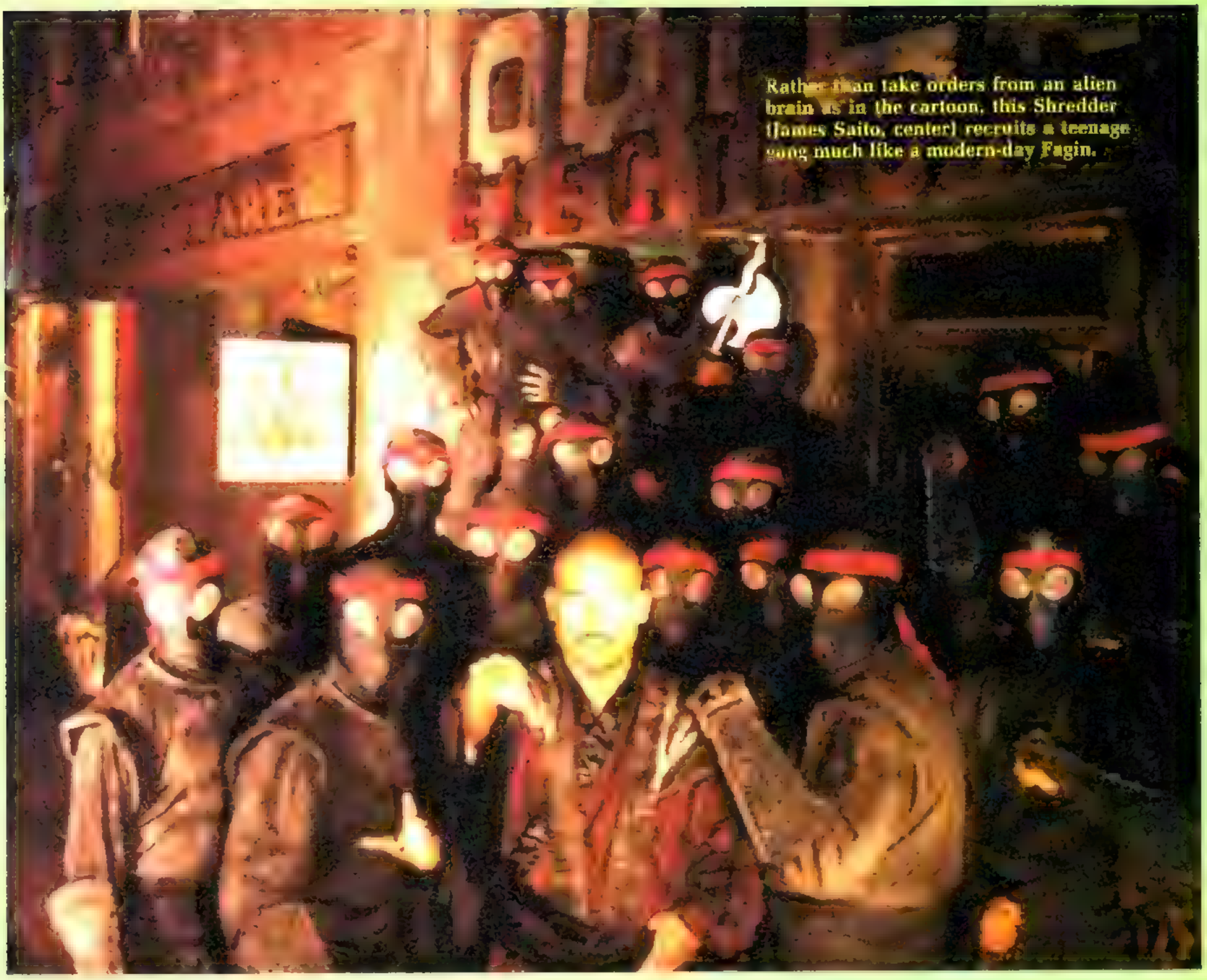
"I would say it is a composite of several of the earlier comic books. We open up the picture with the Turtles already full grown and there is a crime wave underway in New York. April O'Neil is reporting on that with Chief Sterns, and you see very quickly petty thefts happening. It's kind of a Fagin/Oliver story of how young Danny Pennington gets caught up in a crime wave and, in the end, sees that crime doesn't pay. April gets mugged by the Foot clan. The Turtles take her back to their den. She wakes up and freaks out. She is in front of four turtles and the talking rat, and then it's their story of trying to get Danny Pennington out of crime.'

Early reports that April would be played by either Phoebe (*Lace*) Cates or Elisabeth (*Adventures in Babysitting*) Shue have proven premature.

"My first gut reaction was to go with Phoebe Cates," Gray states, "and then they suggested Elisabeth Shue. It wasn't so much a question of economics as it was this series is very special, and to keep the integrity of the Turtles intact. I think it's somewhat of a cop-out to go out and buy a name. Phoebe Cates is *not* going to sell the movie, nor is Elisabeth Shue. I would be better off putting Glenn Close in! The bottom line was to keep the balance between young and up-and-coming actors. They're not stars, but they deliver performances that are going to make them stars."

April O'Neil will be played by Judith (*Cadillac Man*) Hoag, Raymond (*Prizzi's Honor*) Serra essays the part of New York City Police Chief Ross Sterns, Jay (*D O A*) Patterson is April's boss, Charles Pennington, while Michael (*Radio Days*) Turney portrays his 14-year-old son, Danny. Elias (*Tucker*) Koteas plays Casey Jones.

"Casey Jones comes in having been somewhat of a Charlie Bronson type,"



Rather than take orders from an alien brain as in the cartoon, this Shredder (James Saito, center) recruits a teenage gang much like a modern-day Fagin.

Gray relates. "He's a vigilante who takes it upon himself to clean up New York. And he comes upon Raphael in the park. They have a fight and they all hook up together and go out to get Shredder. In the end, we find out that Shredder was the guy that killed Splinter's master. So, it is a very simple plot. It comes out of either book #1 or book #2."

The Shredder role went to character actor James (*The Idolmaker*) Saito, while Splinter is, well, let Tom Gray tell it.

"Splinter is just about the most remarkable character of all. He is a five-foot, talking, mystical rat that's so lifelike you're going to say, 'My God, how did they do that?' It's classical puppeteering. But the way it's done, you think it's totally mobile.

"Cut through all of this," Gray adds. "The budget today is $12 million, which, if a major studio was doing this, would be $30 million. There is a reason for that. They would have gone out and insisted upon getting Jack Nicholson or some other star *du jour*."

TNMT the movie, is scheduled for a March 30, 1990 release but Golden Harvest is gearing up for a massive media blitz. Gray is so confident, he's already talking up the sequel.

"The level of artistic quality, the way the Turtles move, is funnier than hell," he enthuses. "Todd's script just comes off the page. You just die laughing, even watching this in its rawest form. Looking at our dailies, we are confident enough to start doing a second picture some time this year *if* we open big."

That's tall talk, considering that Gray is trying to sell a movie whose storyline is propelled—for all intents and purposes—by a quartet of ambulatory Nerf balls and a rodent.

"The suits themselves are made out of foam latex," he points out. "I think we've gotten away with it in that they are so interesting as characters that you grow fond of them, because the facial expressions are so lifelike. There are 78 facial expressions. They blink, they snarl—all that kind of stuff. We've been able to play off that by photographing them in such a way that people are going to believe in their subterranean world."

Given the very nature of doing a live-action *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, the dreaded shadow of *Howard the Duck* inevitably falls over the conversation. But Gray isn't worried about comparisons with the 1984 Lucasfilm megaflop.

"We all subconsciously think about that," Gray allows, "but I have never even seen *Howard the Duck*. I heard that from one or two places along the studio route, 'Isn't this another *Howard the Duck*?' I said, 'First of all, *Howard the Duck* was $40 million. I also think *Howard the Duck* was a very obscure comic book. This is a mass communications marketing deal. I never even heard of *Howard the Duck* as a comic book.'

"I am not a comic-book reader. I just saw this as a concept out of which to make a very, very interesting movie. I think also *Howard the Duck* was the only thing in the movie that was animated or animatronic. In this movie, we have Splinter, we have the Turtles, and they are very appealing characters. When we saw it on the screen, the way they light their eyes, they gleam. The characteristics of the facial expressions far surpassed anything that was done in *Howard the*

(continued on page 32)

CHAMPIONS OF THE GALAXY WRESTLING GAME

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Too Much Weirdness, Too Little Time

Worn down by all his bizarre projects, Grant Morrison doesn't find it the least bit odd that he needs a rest.

By PHILIP NUTMAN

Glasgow-born Grant Morrison, author of the current incarnations of DC's *Animal Man* and *The Doom Patrol*, has in three short years proved himself to be one of the most interesting writing talents to have emerged from the British invasion spearheaded by Alan Moore. A 29-year-old former punk musician whose interests run to the more outré aspects of the comics scene, he soon established himself as a name to watch, but with the recent publication of *Arkham Asylum*, his controversial graphic novel collaboration with Brit Dave (*Black Orchid*) McKean, the Scottish wordsmith has found himself increasingly in the media spotlight. "And I wonder when the backlash is going to start," he confides.

But Morrison is no overnight success, so however the pendulum of public and critical opinion swings, he appears comfortable with the position he's in. He has paid his dues after 11 years penning comics (although it has only been the last three years that he has been able to make a living at it) and is now excited about the prospect of moving into other areas. But he's fully aware of how success can be as much a curse as a blessing.

"When you start off with nothing, you're too inclined to take on *everything* offered to you," he notes over coffee in a London cafe while on a short trip to the British capital. "I've recently realized how that can be a terrible mistake. I've been writing seven days a week for nearly three years, juggling numerous projects, and doing that can dilute the quality of your work."

Trying to maintain such a high level of concentration over a period of years has, he affirms, undermined his enthusiasm and taken away much of the passion he once had for certain series. "I thought I could handle it, but I've noticed some projects are suffering, like *Zenith* for *2000 AD*, for example. That storyline was started in 1985-'86, and three years later, it's no longer as interesting as it once was, but it's something I've *got* to finish. Sadly, it has gone on the back burner, which is a shame."

Work overload and impending creative burn-out are also contributing factors as to why he's quitting *Animal Man* with issue #26 in July. "While plotting ahead, it seemed to me I couldn't take the story any further

Grant Morrison returns to the Batman, presenting with Klaus Janson a "Gothic" tale from *Legends of the Dark Knight*.

Dark Knight Art: Klaus Janson

after #26, that if I did, I would have to go back over ground I had already explored. And while I could do that, I would rather not as it wouldn't be fair to the material. *Animal Man* has arrived at a point I don't think anyone has reached before in a superhero title, and if I can't take it any further, it's not worth continuing," he states emphatically. 'But I do get many letters from people who are really into the animal rights angle, and it's nice to realize you are encouraging people to think, that they've been looking for something that stands up for those issues. Hopefully, whoever takes on the title will continue in that manner."

What led Morrison to revive the 'man with animal powers" was deep-seated nostalgia. "It's hard for me to put a finger on what exactly I did like about the character," he admits. "Actually, in many respects, Buddy Baker was really boring. But when you are 11 years old, you like to find things that are more obscure than your friends are into. For me, Animal Man was a different costume, a different character, and even if he wasn't great, no one else was into him. I discovered him not in the series' original run but as a back-up reprint in *Adventure Comics*, and I would daydream about what you could do with the character, so I guess I've been carrying the desire to do something around since then."

Although he has been writing comics since he was 18, it wasn't until three years ago that Morrison got the opportunity to explore his ideas in the DC Universe. "[Editor] Karen Berger, [DC president and editor-in-chief] Jenette Kahn, and Dick Giordano were over in England for the UK Comics Convention looking for new writers and artists. Since I had been working for *2000 AD* for some time, I was in the position to get an interview, and that's when I pitched *Animal Man*," he recalls. "Because I've always been interested in animals and have been involved with animal rights, the character was a logical choice for me, but that grew into a platform for the kinds of things important to me—animals, vegetarianism, ecology rather than just approaching it from the perspective of a superhero title."

Approving Morrison's suggestions, Berger initially requested a four-part mini-series. "I was going to set the character up and leave him to his own devices," the writer admits, "but then DC asked me to continue and I found I had exhausted the nostalgia element, so I had to find something else to do with it, which is where the other material started to come in."

Morrison pauses and then switches back to the subject of working too hard. "I've done some work on *Animal Man* that I'm real pleased with, but I've got to cut back on the overall workload, which I've already started to do, and I actually plan to take six months off this year, thanks to the money from *Arkham Asylum*. Writing at the pace I've been going is foolish to try to sustain. But I *will* be carrying on with *The Doom Patrol* during that period, because it only takes me three to four days to write, but I need to slow things down. When I come back to comics on a full-time basis, instead of doing comics on a monthly basis, I think I'll concentrate on one-shot projects where you've got much more control and can put more work into it, which I think makes for a better package."

Like *Animal Man*, with his work on *The Doom Patrol*, Morrison has displayed an offbeat ability to not only expand an existing set of characters and situations but to totally subvert the superhero format. Since he took over the title from Paul Kupperberg with issue #19, the results can only be described as weird, scary and wonderfully entertaining. With Robotman Cliff Steele the only link to the original Doom Patrol (created by Arnold Drake and Bruno Premiani) left unchanged, Morrison has introduced and re-introduced characters whose idiosyncratic natures are continually pushing the stories into uncharted territories. This team of heroes is decidedly different, yet in discussing what he sees as setting them apart from other groups, Morrison offers a surprising statement. "*Nothing* sets them apart, to be honest," he says in all seriousness, without a drop of Scot irony in sight.

"When DC asked me to do *The Doom Patrol*, I seriously gave the matter some consideration. The only thing about them I found interesting was when I was a kid, they scared the life out of me! I used to *hate* looking at that comic because I found it scary; these people didn't seem to be what I thought superheroes should be like. But that's what initially hooked me to commit to the series, to approach the Doom Patrol as an abstract superhero team. I guess I could have done a similar thing with another team, but the DP have this heritage of being slightly odd, so basically I thought, 'Let's

"*Animal Man* has arrived at a point I don't think anyone has reached before in a superhero title," admits Morrison.

Animal Man Art: Chas Truog & Doug Hazlewood

make it *completely* odd.' "

As the original comic didn't have a special place in Morrison's reading habits—the Flash was his main hero, so much so he even made a Flash costume and used to run around Glasgow pretending to be Barry Allen—he admits he doesn't have much nostalgia or respect for the original characters. "For me, *The Doom Patrol* is more about the ideas going into the series than the characters themselves. Hopefully, the characters are interesting to the readers, but my big thing is the series acts as a clearinghouse for my subconscious, which is great fun."

Like the best of today's young writers, Morrison happily swims in the multi-media swamp, influenced by pop culture iconography, music, and a disparate range of literary works and writers such as Lewis Carroll, Lord Byron, Charles De Quincey, South American magical realists like Jorge Luis Borges and plenty of non-fiction. Confused? Check out issues #26-28 of *The Doom Patrol* in which our heroes take on the Brotherhood of Dada. What happened to the Brotherhood of *Evil*? Morrison got rid of them in true surrealist spirit, so the Doom Patrol was suddenly faced with a bunch of illogical loonies led by Mr. Nobody, who declares himself the patron saint of insignificance. What can anyone do when the "bad" guys pull stunts like standing on top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France and dropping a plucked chicken instead of a bomb, claiming to have taken over the world, as in issue #27, "The Painting That Ate Paris"?

"Thinking about it," he confesses, "I probably wouldn't be able to get away with this stuff if I was writing about a better known team, yet with the Doom Patrol, it isn't too much of a push to send them over the edge."

On taking over the series, the first thing Morrison did was to take a long hard look at the characters. "Each character *has* to have a psychological base to interest me. That's what I mean ' ideas, and that has more to do with character traits than being interested in super-powers, which I'm not at all. My interests lie in the emotional states they're in rather than if they can run at 600 miles per hour."

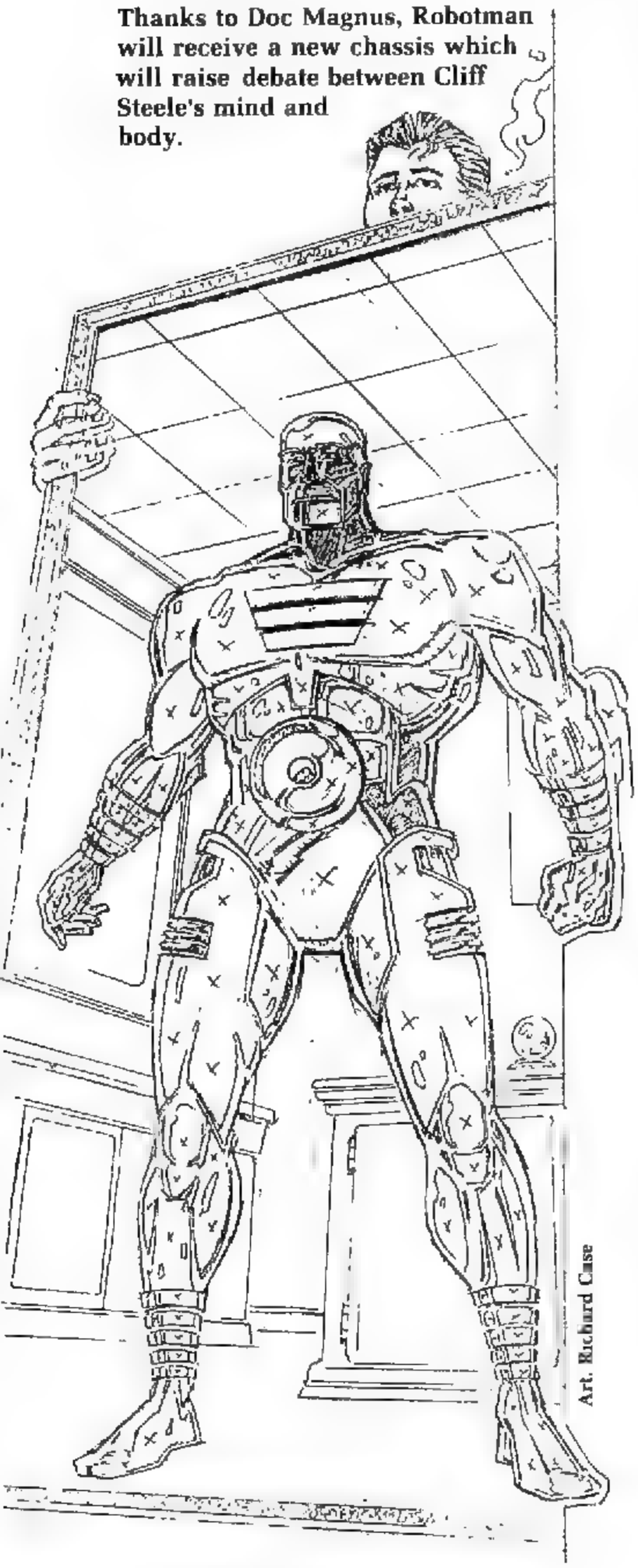
Future issues will deal with elements like the nature of Crazy Jane's madness. Jane, a multiple personality victim, has been trying to identify just how many personalities she has with the aid of Cliff Steele, and in issue #30, Steele will journey inside Jane's head to travel the Underground, the psychic subway network that connects the different personalities. Jane, disturbingly, has her origins in a real multiple personality case.

'I read a book called *When Rabbit Howls* by Trudy Chase, a woman who has something like 90 personalities. The idea that someone like this could function at all is *incredible*," Morrison says with an astounded expression on his face. "This woman doesn't even have a base personality; the real Trudy Chase doesn't exist, all she is is a conglomeration of personalities and different ones take over in any given situation. When this woman sought psychiatric analysis, she started to disintegrate under the process and discovered that who she thought she was was nothing more than a facade erected by the other personalities to deal with the outside world. It's such an awesome idea. I felt a need to explore it, and Crazy Jane provided the opportunity."

Doom Patrol #31-33 will introduce a new character, Willoughby Kipling, whom Morrison describes as "a drunken English sot." Kipling, a member of the esoteric order of the Knights Templar, is also involved with a bunch called The Cult of the Unwritten Book, who are in pursuit of a boy who has a new book of the Bible tattooed on his back. Not surprisingly, the book contains an occult secret. "This idea actually came from a dream I had," Morrison reveals. "I just woke up one night and wrote it all down. Again, it's great to be able to use this subconscious material. The story is a basic 'End of the Universe' scenario, but I had a great time writing it as the Cult has so many subdivisions to it that every bizarre idea I've ever had went into the story in some form or another."

The fact that Morrison feels strongly about certain subjects makes it hard for him to keep *Animal Man* from turning too preachy.

Thanks to Doc Magnus, Robotman will receive a new chassis which will raise debate between Cliff Steele's mind and body.



Art, Richard Case

Beyond the End of the Universe, Morrison has decided to give Cliff Steele a new body, allowing the writer to play with the philosophical question of the schism between mind and body. "That's right," Morrison agrees with a broad smile, "there's a mind-body argument where the body decides it wants to go off and have some fun, saying the brain's hindering it. So, we have a dialogue between Cliff's brain in the tank and the new body—the senses-shattering conversation you never thought you would see!" he deadpans.

After this upheaval, the Doom Patrol will continue exploring many of the narrative seeds already sown. "I can't go into specifics right now," he mentions, "as the full details are rather vague right now, but I've got a skeleton plotline that will take me up to issue #60 and brings a lot of what's gone on to a head. But once I get to that point, I might not want to continue, I don't know. The next year or so is going to be fun as I tie together all kinds of threads which will culminate at issue #60."

One thing that won't be happening is the revival of any characters from the Doom Patrol's past. "I made that decision because the other stuff I've done for DC is me working out nostalgia—all the characters I loved as a kid and thought would be great to bring back and see how they would work, which is something many of the other British guys have done, too. But with *The Doom Patrol*, I deliberately want to go in the other direction with totally new stuff. Hopefully, kids reading the book today will look back on it in 20 years' time with the same sense of awe as I had when I was young, the feelings I get now when I think back on certain comics I read between the ages of six and 11. It wouldn't be fair for me to dwell upon things that were relevant to me at that age, rehashing them now."

In talking with Grant Morrison, it soon becomes clear that much of what occurred in the late '60s had a profound influence on his outlook and narrative interests. "What I loved most about that decade was the *really* strange stuff going around like the John Broome/Gardner Fox *Flash*, which was one of my all-time favorites because it was so peculiar. There's really nothing like that now—comics have become so conventional in many respects—but back then, you could get away with a story where the Flash would turn into a paving stone for 20 pages. That would be the story's departure point and then the ramifications of such a crazy idea would be explored. There was an incredible surreal quality and I want

Art: Klaus Janson

The *Batman* movie strikes again! This time, it's against what Morrison wanted the hero to look like in his *Legends* story.

Art: Bigley & McKenna
Characters & Art: Copyright IPC Magazines Ltd.

Like Zenith, Morrison has become reluctant about finishing what he began.

"If the 'British Comics Invasion' can be likened to the British music invasion of the '60s, then where are the new generation of American writers?" asks Morrison, here at a Jim Hanley's Universe comic store.

Photo: David Hutchison

Animal Man Art: Chas Truog & Doug Hazlewood

All Animal Man, Doom Patrol & Dark Knight characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1989, 1990 DC Comics Inc.

Despite a price tag and contents that were not aimed at kids, there were originally certain things in *Arkham Asylum* that would not be allowed.

The Doom Patrol to tap into that, to plug into deeper currents from the subconscious.'

In the post-*Watchmen* era, it has become faddish to decry superheroes, to dismiss them as mere juvenilia, but Morrison makes a point of stating where he stands on the matter. "I don't dislike superheroes per se. In fact, it would be dishonest for me to say I can't stand them as they were an important part of my childhood. It's just a case of me finding most of what's happening today in that area as dull and uninspiring. In the '60s, practically everything was offbeat so many people with skewed imaginations were writing weird stuff then. Even the most mundane Jimmy Olsen comic could be really bizarre. Maybe it was something to do with LSD in the drinking water, but there was definitely a lot of strange stuff going on."

Speaking of strange stuff, *Arkham Asylum*, which Karen Berger discussed in COMICS SCENE #10, certainly fits the bill on that count by taking the Batman mythos into blacker waters than even Frank Miller sailed with *The Dark Knight Returns*. "I pitched that project at the same time as *Animal Man*," Morrison recalls excitedly, "and to be honest, I had *none* of the plot worked out. I was making it up as I talked with Karen. My departure point for the story was the phrase 'the lunatics have taken over the asylum' and the primary focus was the villains. It was going to be a 64-page special, *not* the 120-page epic journey into the darkness of the human soul."

Surprisingly, in the project's original stages, Batman had little to do with the story. According to Morrison, the Dark Knight insinuated himself into the plot. "It steadily began to grow into an exploration of Batman's psyche through the other characters," the writer notes, "as if each one represented something in his psychological makeup."

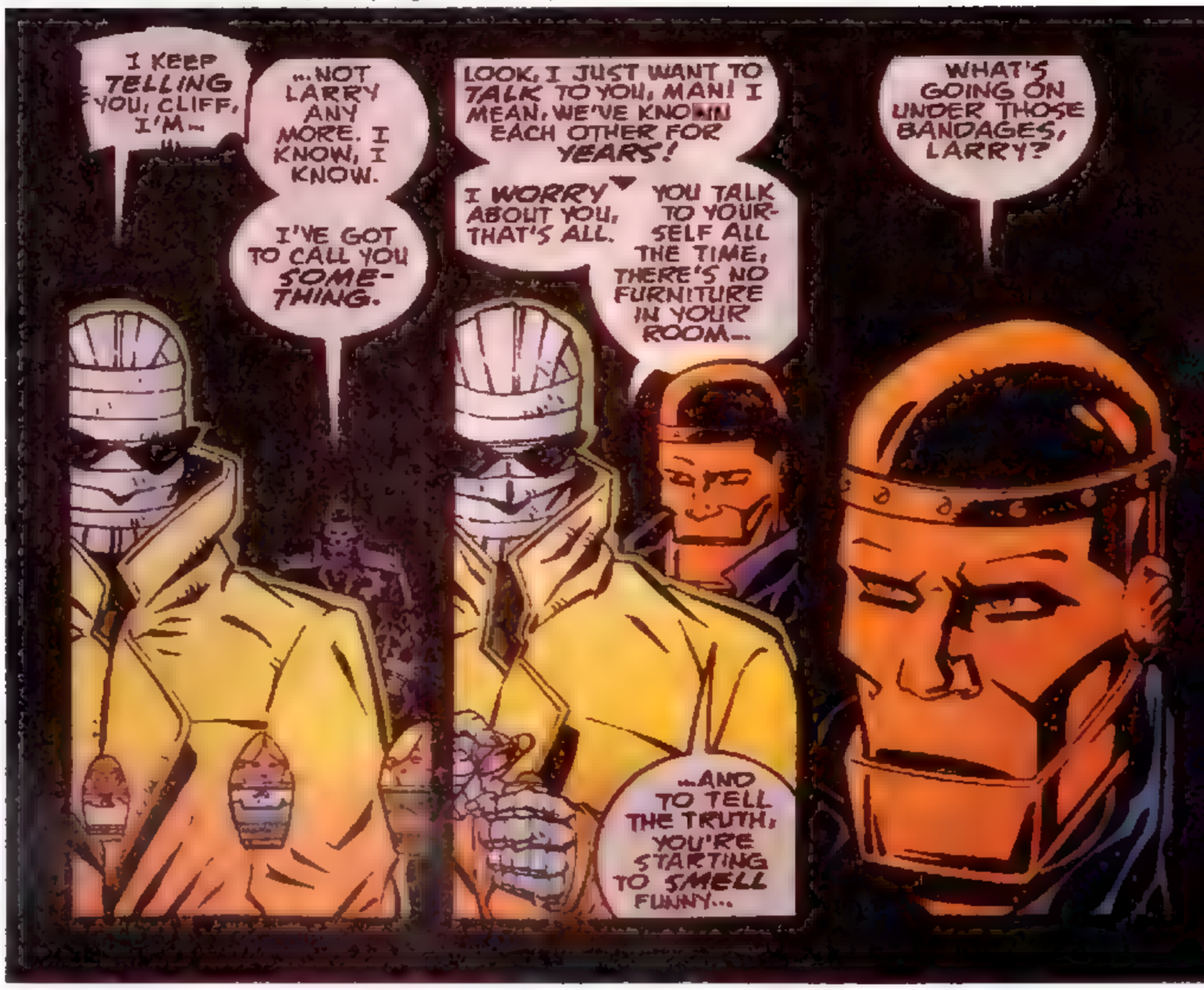
As the project grew, *Arkham Asylum*'s publication date was repeatedly pushed back, fueling speculation that Morrison was having difficulties with DC. "I wouldn't exactly term them censorship problems," he says cautiously, "but it was more than just a difference of opinions. Initially, I sent in the first draft and then DC called back to say they loved it –but they had a few problems. The few problems were pages 1 through 80, and what they were saying was 'This has to go.' " Morrison fought hard to ensure his vision remained intact, eventually winning with the support of Karen Berger. "Karen was the only one who understood what I wanted to do, and she was great at helping sort it out." But then the *Batman* movie reared its head, and the situation changed again. Suddenly, all the elements Morrison was dealing with—the nature of madness and pain—were considered suspect in relation to the film, and DC once again stepped in to forbid the use of certain material.

"So, I got yet another phone call," he remembers, "and it was a question of 'You can't do this, this, this or that.' I was exasperated. Specifically, we couldn't have the Joker dressed as Madonna, despite there being a *serious* reason for it, and the word 'masturbate' was definitely prohibited. They were 100 percent firm on that, and it seems there is a golden rule somewhere"—Morrison throws up his hands like a TV evangelist—"forbidding the use of *that* word anywhere in relation to Batman. This

was an incidental detail used in a doctor's report, quite clinical, not prurient, and used solely in relation to a mental patient. I couldn't see a problem with that in a book so obviously aimed at an adult audience. But they said no." However, the rest of the material under scrutiny did remain.

Despite the frustrations surrounding *Arkham Asylum*, Morrison was happy to accept an assignment to write issues #6-10 of *Legends of the Dark Knight*, partially because he wanted to approach the character from a different perspective. "What Dave [McKean] and I wanted to do with *Arkham* was use Batman in a *completely* symbolic way, to say this isn't a man at all, he's almost an aggregation of ideas, which is why Dave painted it in a ghostly style with Batman as an almost spiritual force. The *Dark Knight* story, on the other hand, was an idea I'd had for ages about how it would be if you did a contemporary Batman story set within all the conventions of 18th century Gothic literature, as I thought that would be a natural home for the character. Some of the 1950s stories had that Gothic feel, so the *Dark Knight* story is almost as if Horace Walpole [a Gothic author of the period] had written Batman. Again, I'm a bit annoyed because of censorship, and again, it was due to the *Batman* movie. I asked for the character to be drawn in a slightly different way—bigger ears, a slightly hunched back, more spooky—but DC wouldn't have it, so we ended up with him just looking like Batman, which took away some of the fun for me. Believe it or not, DC's editors are now getting memos from Warner Bros. that dictate the exact size and shape of Batman's ears," Morrison laughs.

Doom Patrol Art: Richard Case/John Nyberg/Colors: Danny Vozo


I KEEP TELLING YOU, CLIFF, I'M--
...NOT LARRY ANY MORE. I KNOW, I KNOW.
I'VE GOT TO CALL YOU SOMETHING.
LOOK, I JUST WANT TO TALK TO YOU, MAN! I MEAN, WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR YEARS!
I WORRY ABOUT YOU, THAT'S ALL.
YOU TALK TO YOURSELF ALL THE TIME, THERE'S NO FURNITURE IN YOUR ROOM--
WHAT'S GOING ON UNDER THOSE BANDAGES, LARRY?
...AND TO TELL THE TRUTH, YOU'RE STARTING TO SMELL FUNNY...

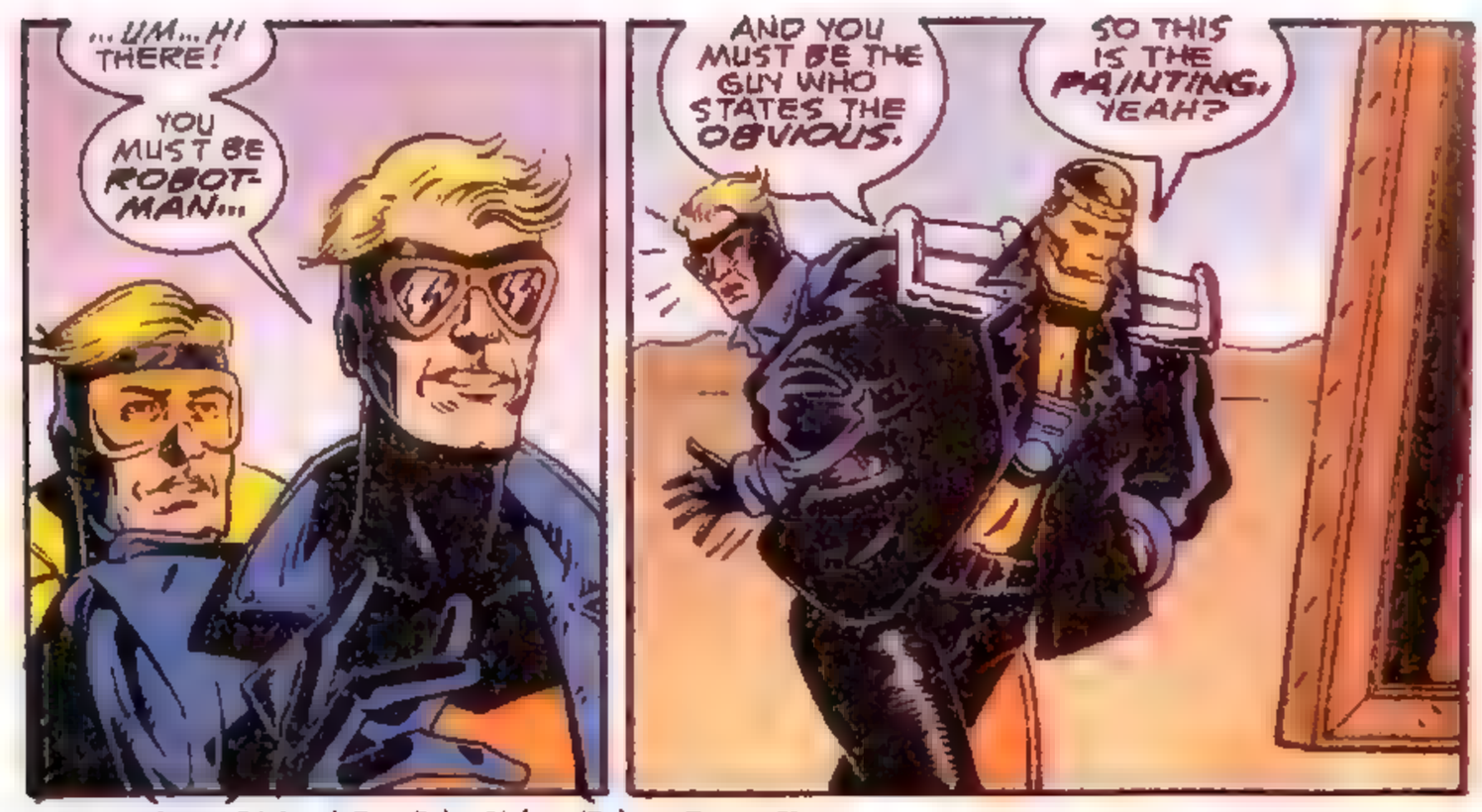
"Let's make it *completely* odd" was Morrison's edict for handling *Doom Patrol*.

Controversy seems to follow the writer like a lost dog. Even Animal Man has had its share of detractors, resulting in one of the liveliest letters pages this side of the *New York Times*. Morrison, however, can't quite see what all the fuss is about. "I frequently have this problem: Things I find perfectly natural in an intelligent work of fiction seem to be considered controversial by many people." Yet Morrison does concede he has sailed close to the edge in a number of *Animal Man* stories.

"I've become increasingly concerned about the book turning into a 'cause of the month' syndrome, trying not to turn it into a soapbox for my concerns. That's OK to a certain extent, but there comes a point where some readers can feel like they're being bashed over their heads by the writer's social concerns, and I don't want to come off as preachy. Reading something overly political can be annoying, but it's hard to be objective when you feel so passionate about a subject."

Aside from the book's potentially problematic material, another aspect of the series that's attracted attention is the writer's interest in meta-fictional concerns. "*Animal Man* has become as much a story about writing comics as it has about superheroes and animal rights," he explains. "One of the great staples of modernist fiction is books addressing themselves. Comics already have that in their tradition, and again, this is based on things I read in '60s *Flash* comics where the character would meet people like Julius Schwartz. It was a great idea that wasn't done with any real sophistication and I wanted to take it further." In issue #14, for example, Morrison appears in a four-page section walking along the Glasgow canal trying to think what to write next. This sequence blended into the overall narrative as a dream experienced by Indian scientist James Highwater, who is starting to suspect he is a fictional creation. This plot element will continue to develop, culminating in issue #26 when Buddy Baker will meet his maker (so to speak). Other than that, Morrison is reticent to go into full details.

"I've been sowing the seeds over the last few issues and the story's various strands will start pulling to-



Doom Patrol Art: Richard Case/John Nyberg/Colors: Danny Vozo

Morrison's heroes meet, but they don't get along. Maybe Buddy will tell Cliff he's only a comic-book character.

Arkham Art. Dave McKean

"It steadly began to grow into an exploration of Batman's psyche," says Morrison of the building of *Arkham Asylum*.

gether in the next month or so. All I'll say is Buddy will be facing a serious personal tragedy and a great deal of conflict, both external and internal."

This iconoclastic approach to comics is something he feels the British are predisposed to. "We've definitely got an in-built cynicism towards the medium, particularly superheroes," he opines. "In this country, we don't appear to have the same kind of editorial conflicts most of us have had with American editors. There's a general acceptance that the medium is wide open in terms of exploring different ideas. We don't have to live up to Boy Scout ideals with our costumed heroes. Take Judge Dredd for example. He's quite antithetical to what you usually find in an American comic."

One of the projects Morrison has recently worked on that substantiates this is "St. Swithin's Day," a four-part tale of "teenage angst based on diaries I kept when I was 19," published in *Trident*, a black and white bi-monthly British book. Illustrated by Paul Grist, it tells of a young man who decides to go to London to assassinate Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. "Obviously, I didn't do this, but I can't help thinking the world could be a better place if it had happened," he says, aware he's courting controversy again. "But it's one of my favorite stories and it's been great to write as it's as far removed from superheroes as you can get."

Although Morrison will continue to delve into his subconscious with *The Doom Patrol*, he s going to pursue other avenues over the coming months. "I wrote a play called *Red King Rising* last year, which was well received at the Edinburgh Festival, and I want to do another one. It's very refreshing to work on something self-contained like a theater piece rather than an on-going series. I've done so much of that it's important for me to know I can do something else." Also on the horizon are some short fiction and perhaps a novel. "I've got an idea that would only work as a book, and that seems the next logical step to take. But at this point, I have no idea when it'll happen." However, he emphasizes he won't be abandoning comics, that the change of pace will act as a creative recharging process.

As for the field's future, Grant Morrison hopes the slow diversification in other areas of the medium will spread to the superhero genre. "If the 'British Comics Invasion' can be likened to the British music invasion of the '60s, then where are the new generation of American writers? Where are the comics equivalents of groups like The Doors and The Byrds—bands that took what the British groups did and turned it around from a unique American perspective. Most of the new American superhero writers I've come across seem to think using a couple of poetic captions like Alan Moore elevates the quality of their work to art—but it *doesn't* without a fresh perspective. Maybe you can't and shouldn't change the superhero as it is a unique American creation, a pop culture myth. And myths survive because of their consistent nature. I don't know," he shrugs with honesty. "Perhaps I'm being too cynical. The medium's cutting edge might not lie with superheroes, perhaps it's in more personal works like Chester Brown's *Yummy Fur*." CS

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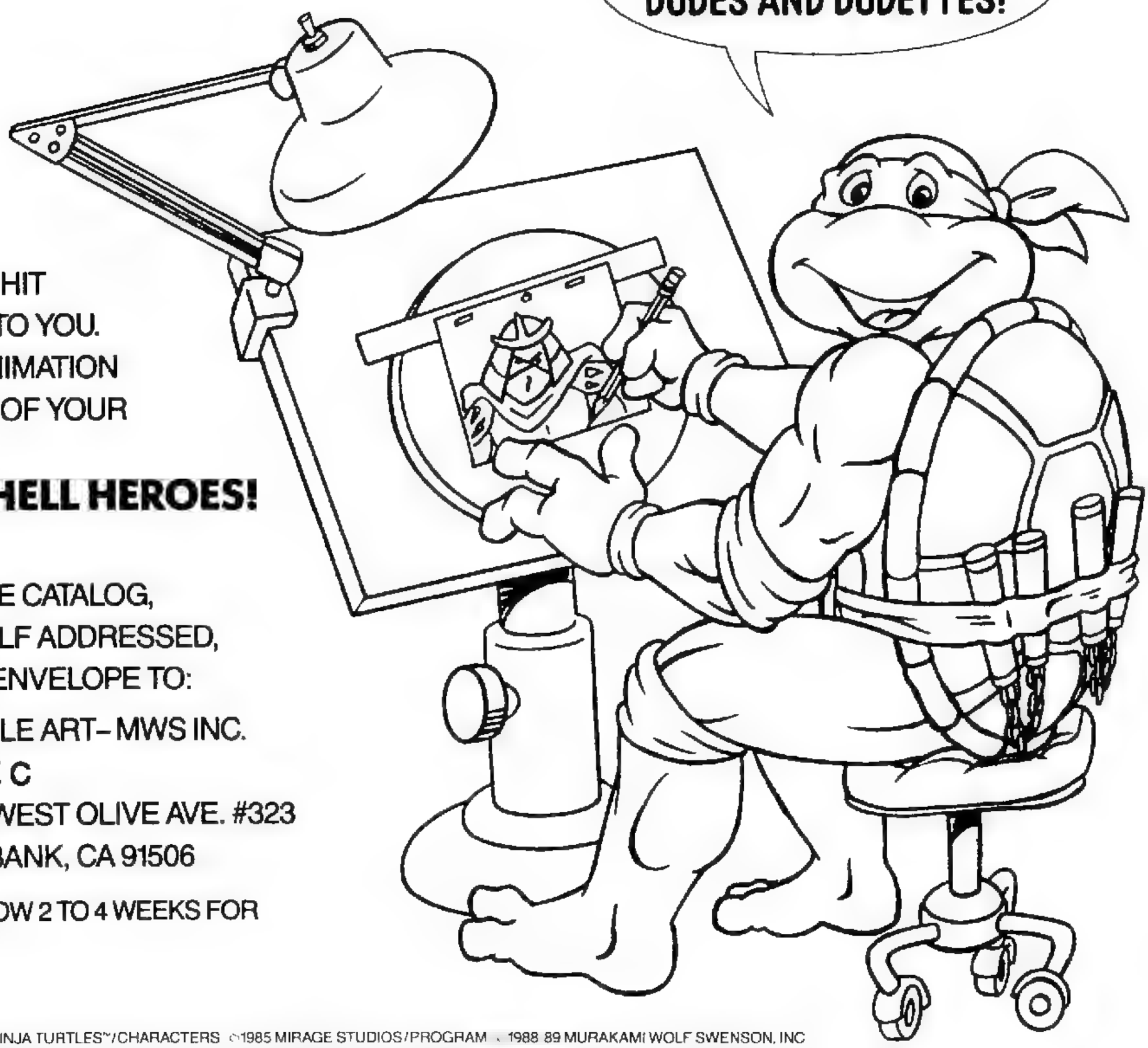

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By SCOTT LOBDELL

Most fledgling comic-book writers would trade their word processors to scribe a monthly series. And if that series was to focus on a classic costumed adventurer like, say, Adam Strange, most writers would consider bartering off one or more of their limbs in order to secure the opportunity to chronicle the perennial "hero of both worlds" on a monthly basis.

Richard Bruning has little in common with most writers.

"I would rather *not* see it done as an ongoing series, and I *don't* want to do it," reveals Bruning in regards to possibly continuing the three-issue mini-series, illustrated by Andy and Adam Kubert, which marks the first-ever issue of a character who debuted way back in *Showcase* #17. Nonetheless, don't ask Bruning to consider an extended run. "The intent is to do these stories as little Prestige *limited* series, maybe an occasional graphic novel—to treat his adventures the way the Europeans treat graphic novels.

"We're going to take Adam [Strange, not Kubert] from one point to another and leave him there for a year or two and then do another major jump with the character. Then two years later, do it again."

For those readers who may have been living on another planet for the past several decades (or possibly only visiting it courtesy of their own zeta-beam), Adam Strange is a globe-trotting archaeologist with an uncanny knack for being in the right place at the right time. Since the early '60s, Strange has made it a point to be in the spot where the otherworldly zeta-beam, an intergalactic teleportation ray, hits Earth so he might temporarily traverse the galaxy to arrive on the progressively lifeless and perpetually listless planet of Rann.

By virtue of his valor and vitality, Strange has become the planet's lone hero, rescuing it time and again from off-world marauders and savage creatures. While this might please the government's high-profile Sardath and his daughter (Adam's pregnant wife) Alanna, it doesn't always sit well with the people of the city of Rannagar. As technologically advanced as the citizens are, they have little to do but hang out and alternately idolize and malign their frequently visiting alien champion.

"The character's basic premise has always fascinated me. This guy has no powers, he's just from another planet. What makes him different from all the other people on the planet? Why is he different there then when he's on Earth? He's not a hero on Earth particularly.

"In a nutshell, I've taken pretty much everything what happened with the character up until this point, as gospel—more or less—but with the sense that it could have revealed more of what the characters and their world was about.

"One of the things I tried to do with *Adam Strange* was look into the reasons why the characters did what they did back then." And, says Bruning, he also wanted to explore "where Adam's life is right now having been on Rann for a long time and having a pregnant wife, and being offered the chance to stay on that planet forever." But while Strange may have long yearned for the opportunity to make Rann his permanent mailing address, the space traveler isn't aware of all the risks involved, not the

Strange Interlude

Blasted into space once more, Adam Strange discovers the one alien he has never confronted is himself.

least of which is the political machinations of Sardath and his people.

"We're also going into a little exploration of Adam's background. We've never seen anything about Adam's family before, or his past, or any relationships he had on Earth before he came to Rann." Chief among them is his strained relationship with his much older parents. It will be revealed that young Adam suffered from a low self-image as a result of what he always believed was an unwanted pregnancy. Also examined is the dynamics between Strange and his primary social role model – a restless older brother named Todd who may have instilled Adam with the basis for his interplanetary wanderlust.

Notes the writer, "We take that through a whole developmental change where he learns why Sardath did what he did in the past stories and what the people of Rann think of Adam as an alien coming in from outside and constantly saving their ass. From there, we launch him off into a whole new direction.

"We've never seen anything about Adam's family before," notes writer Richard Bruning. That will change.

GO BOY GET 'N HUSTLE!!
AH... YEA DONT-
YEAH ADAM!!
I GOT WHOA!!
LOOK, NO DOC GOT AH!! PRETTY GOOD HUH?
NOT TOO SHABBY SHORT? YA DID OK
NOW FOR YOUR NEXT TEST, I WANT YA TO PUT YER HEAD N YER MOUTH
JEEZ COOOO IT'S GROSS

All Adam Strange Art: Trademark & Copyright 1989, 1990 DC Comics, Inc

All Adam Strange Art: Andy Kubert

"The Gardner Fox stories, taken as a group, are very interesting, but they all just dealt with the surface issues. All the stories, if you go back and read them, are fairly formulaic; not to be nasty about it, but they were fairly cut and dried," Bruning says. "A variation on the same theme *every* time. So, they don't hold up very well reading one after the other."

While his love for Adam Strange doesn't date back to childhood treks to the newsstand, Bruning has been romancing this particular story for quite a while. "I first had this idea almost four years ago now. I've only been able to write in my spare time, however, largely because I've had a full-time job-and-a-half," that job being Design Director at DC.

Not that he's complaining. On the contrary, this extended deadline has allowed him time to polish his story. "I had the opportunity to work with Alan Moore when he was doing the Adam Strange storyline in *Swamp Thing*. Alan was able to lay out a few of the basic ideas I had worked out for the series, like the planet being barren, the very few children being produced, saying it was due to radiation inherent in the disaster that happened on the planet a thousand years ago, which was nuclear war. Alanna getting pregnant was a big deal then—the child being a half-breed as it were."

A glance at the first issue reveals this isn't going to be a clean-slate approach to the character. Rather than erasing what has gone before, Bruning has chosen to build upon the foundation established by such comic legends as Adam Strange's creator Gardner Fox and frequent partner Carmine Infantino. "That was my intent, and I would be very happy if people perceive it when they're reading the series.

"It's not that hard, because if you look at the original stories, they were constructed very well, they just didn't explore the depth. Our orientation now is different than it was 20, 30, 40 years ago for the creators.

One thing I read in the work of people like Frank Miller and Alan Moore was that you can go into the

CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS? HIS OWN MUSEUM? NEXT THEY'LL PUT H M ON THE HIGH COUNCIL
WHY NOT? CLONES OR ALIENS WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD IT MAKE?

Taking off from the events in *Swamp Thing*, the series will delve further into the hero's situation as a disliked stranger in a strange land.

Strange may have picked the wrong time to become a permanent resident of Rann.

character and examine it, and use your brain a little to just extend what's there. You don't have to trash anything," Bruning contends. "You don't have to say [in an ominous voice], 'THAT WAS AN ALTERNATE CONTINUITY! Let's make *this* more complicated.'

"People progress, and you can make the characters progress if you really want to apply yourself to it. It's been fun, the most fun I've had in comics so far."

Much of that fun can be attributed to his collaboration with fellow relative newcomers, the Brothers Kubert. Seeing someone like Andy Kubert, who is this incredibly raw talent, drawing this stuff is very exciting. The amazing thing about both Andy and Adam is that they managed to take the absolute complete comic-book sensibilities of their father and do new variations on it," says Bruning, referring to the legendary Joe Kubert.

Though not willing to reveal the story's ending, the author allows, "The story ends leaving Adam Strange alive somewhere in the universe. If you never read anything more about the character, you would have read a complete story."

And while he's still adamant about not doing an ongoing book, Richard Bruning confesses he wouldn't mind having the chance to launch Adam Strange's further exploits in a future mini-series. "I have a whole other storyline following this one, but we'll see, it's all very tentative. If people want to see more, or if DC wants to do more, *I'm* interested." (C5)

Unwilling to trash old continuity, Bruning plans instead to add shading to the events in Adam and Alanna's lives.

Prince of Atlantis, King of Conglomerates

According to John Byrne, Namor the Sub-Mariner has a new plan to conquer the surface—he'll buy it.

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL

Namor is one of the richest men in the world," notes John Byrne, about to embark on a new voyage with Marvel's prince of Atlantis. "That was established years ago, back when Stan Lee and Jack Kirby were doing the character. He knows where all the sunken ships in the world are, he has these vast resources of wealth. Hell, he bought a movie studio once—walked up and paid *cash* [*Fantastic Four* #9]. Now, after all these years of going to war, playing superhero and punching and hitting, he has finally realized that the one thing that surface dwellers really understand is money."

That being the case, in the first issue of his new series, *Namor the Sub-Mariner*, the pointy-eared monarch buys a floundering corporation and transforms the firm into a major force in world finance, one capable of taking over those companies that threaten the environment and dismantling them. For the first several issues, Byrne says, Namor will be a mysterious figure behind the scenes of Oracle, Inc. No one inside or outside the company will know that the Sub-Mariner is running the show with the exception of the father-and-daughter team who act as his front. 'He becomes, eventually, sort of Donald Trump with wings on his heels," Byrne chuckles.

"Namor has realized that real power doesn't lie in strength or superpowers—or even being a king. It s all in how many people you can buy," Byrne points out. "That's the cynical twist we're taking this time."

The writer/artist says he chose this new path for Namor's life in order to free him from the traps he has been caught in in the past. "Poor old Namor has always been stuck with sitting on his throne, waiting for people to come and attack him," he notes. "As a result, his stories have tended to be very wet, and he has been surrounded by thousands of people who do what he does—live under water—

which makes him somewhat less than unique. Now, the only Atlantean we're going to feature regularly is his cousin, Namorita. Namor himself will get to wear tuxedos and do his Bruce Wayne riff," Byrne laughs.

Despite several attempts over the years—the longest being the solo book that began in 1968—Namor has never been able to sustain a title under his own power for very long. Nevertheless, Byrne insists, "He is *tremendously* popular. When we put him in the Avengers, we got a lot of positive feedback, and any time he turned up in *Fantastic Four*, I always got tremendous mail saying, 'Wow! Sub-Mariner! He's so cool!' I think he was trapped by his idiom. Now, we're breaking that idiom, so he will be much more dynamic—flying, fighting—much more what the kids want. And he won't be surrounded by thousands of people who do what he does, and he *won't* be battling god-awful villains. Sub-Mariner has probably the *worst* rogues' gallery at Marvel—Attuma, Orca, Tiger Shark—all these utter idiots living under the ocean. There's a whole bunch of new stuff happening around him, and for anybody who hasn't read the character before, it's going to be *carte blanche*: Here's a whole new guy. He'll still be recognizable to the people who read him in the past, but he won't be bringing along any of the barnacles that have accumulated."

Among that "new stuff" surrounding Namor is a new team of recurring antagonists and a new supporting cast. The antagonists are Devlin and Phoebe Marrs, brother and sister twins who run Marrs Corp., the major competitor to Namor's Oracle, Inc. "They find out that this mystery man has bought Oracle and they want to find out what's going on," Byrne explains. "Since this is a comic book, they grab a super-villain and have him attack the company in the second and third issues. The one they grab is the Griffin."

That choice of villain was no fluke either, Byrne notes. "My thought was, 'If we take this basically naked guy and have him fight a guy who has lion's fangs and claws and all this stuff, if the kiddies don't figure out how tough Sub-Mariner is, they *never* will.' " Also, says Byrne, "it fits in with my philosophy of using lame villains and trying to make something good out of them."

On the positive side, the Sub-Mariner has found allies at Oracle in Caleb and Carrie Alexander as the series opens. "Carrie will probably develop into a romantic interest eventually," Byrne admits. "But, as I'm playing it right now, she's not too thrilled with the idea, because she knows that Namor's wives and/or girl friends tend to get dead frequently."

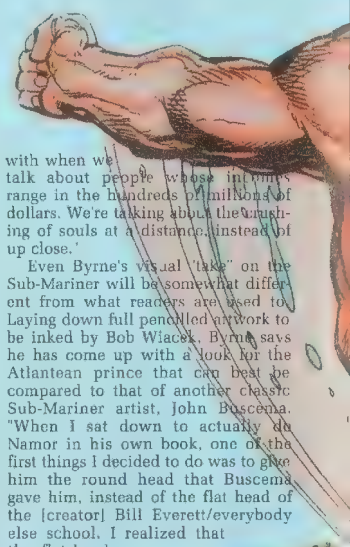
Byrne's interest in Marvel's son of Atlantis dates from his earliest contact with the character. "It's one of those pure and simple gut-reaction things," he recalls. "The very first time I saw him—*Fantastic Four* #6—I just thought he was so cool, sitting there brooding, with that odd face that Jack Kirby gave him in those days.

"Of course, that was a real sucker punch story," Byrne remarks, "teaming up with Doctor Doom, being betrayed, flying through space wearing only swimming trunks—that gave me the suggestion that this guy is tougher than God! And, in as much as *Fantastic Four* has always been my *favorite* Marvel book, anything to do with the FF has immediate appeal. I said to the editor, Terry Kavanaugh, the other day, 'Doing *Sub-Mariner*, I'm having many of the same feelings I had when I was doing the FF. It's almost as if I'm doing this multi-part Fantastic Four story that the FF haven't appeared in yet.' "

That long-standing interest in the Sub-Mariner was a part of what led Byrne to the project, that and a few coincidences, as he tells it. "When I first came back to Marvel, I was looking around for something to do...and the two books [executive editor] Mark Gruenwald suggested were *She-Hulk* and *Sub-Mariner*," Byrne recalls. "I developed concepts for both of them. *She-Hulk* happened, but *Sub-Mariner* got derailed when [editor] Howard Mackie begged and pleaded that I do *West Coast Avengers*. Then, when *She-Hulk* went away, a coincidence occurred. They had decided to go ahead with the *Sub-Mariner* title, and what they had decided on was almost identical to what I had cooked up when I was developing plans for it. Thus, when Terry Kavanaugh asked if I was interested, I said 'Sure, that's what *I* wanted to do.' Basically, it was a convergence of coincidences that brought me to the book."

Byrne, known for a "back-to-basics" approach to many series he has taken control of in the past—including a long run on the *Fantastic Four* and a somewhat more celebrated though less critically acclaimed stint on the Superman books—says that is, in part, his angle on the Sub-Mariner as well. "I want to take Namor back to his position in *Fantastic Four* #4 [the story that reintroduced him to the Marvel Universe, after an absence of some seven years]. We are getting much more the loner, the outcast, the brooding cold fish," Byrne acknowledges, aware of the inherent pun.

"The series won't be grim per se. It's going to be a flash-and-dazzle series, harkening back to some of my earlier work. There will be a lot of big, flashy, punching and hitting stuff. It's set in the Olympian levels of high finance. Every once in a while, Namor will see that these Olympian heights are grounded in the gutter, but for the most part, it will be a different kind of grit—the kind we deal with when we talk about people whose incomes range in the hundreds of millions of dollars. We're talking about the crushing of souls at a distance instead of up close."



Even Byrne's visual "take" on the Sub-Mariner will be somewhat different from what readers are used to. Laying down full penciled artwork to be inked by Bob Wiacek, Byrne says he has come up with a look for the Atlantean prince that can best be compared to that of another classic Sub-Mariner artist, John Buscema. "When I sat down to actually do Namor in his own book, one of the first things I decided to do was to give him the round head that Buscema gave him, instead of the flat head of the [creator] Bill Everett/everybody else school. I realized that the flat head

"He won't look like *any* Sub-Mariner I've done before," Byrne vows.

Big business battles back as Namor faces the Griffin. There have to be super-villains to fight. This *is* a comic book.

All Namor Art & Characters, Trademark & Copyright 1990 Marvel Entertainment Group

All Namor Art: John Byrne

"Cute little cousin" Namorita co-stars in the new series. "Namor doesn't think of her as a warrior," John Byrne notes. "He's a bit of a chauvinist."

"For the rest of it, I've been trying to get the feel of somebody who looks like a powerful swimmer. He's not built like Captain America—he's broad in the shoulders, very narrow in the waist, with big thighs like a swimmer. It's a very conscious attempt to make him look *different* from my generic superhero figure. He won't look like any Sub-Mariner I've done before."

worked when he's in a group or when he's guest starring—it makes him kind of funky and different—but when he's the focus of the book, it makes him look weird. So, since it was already established that he can look like that when he wants to, I guess he just uses extra Dippity-Do that morning to slick his hair down harder," Byrne chuckles.

The artistic differences even "go beneath the surface," one might say. So far, Atlantis only appears in the first-issue recap of Namor's past, and, like Rich Buckler in last year's *Saga of the Sub-Mariner* mini-series (CS #4), Byrne has found it necessary to redesign some parts of that society's look.

" 'If we take this basically naked guy and have him fight a guy who has lion's fangs and claws,' " Byrne theorizes, readers will "figure out how tough Sub-Mariner is."

"*Nobody* sits in Atlantis when I draw it," he notes. "That's silly. When I was drawing the first issue, I phoned Terry Kavanaugh and said, 'I've just finished a scene that is going to shake the Marvel Universe to its very foundations.' He knew immediately what I meant. 'You did Atlantis without stairs,' he said. And I answered, 'No, there are stairs—but people don't *walk* on them, they *swim* up and down them.' I'm assuming that since this is Atlantis, it's based on ancient Greek architecture, so there are stairs and windows. That doesn't trouble me. But when you have people standing and sitting, then it becomes silly. It just makes it seem as if they're standing and sitting and every once in a while, they fly. You don't get any sense of people actually swimming. My Atlanteans all float."

Byrne last handled the Sub-Mariner as a member of the Avengers, a title he currently writes. Namor is still a member of that group, nominally, but the writer/artist reveals he won't be appearing in those pages for a while. "Most of the Avengers think he's dead at the moment, and he's keeping it that way. The world will discover he's alive pretty quickly, however. Namor will find out that it's not very easy to have everybody think you're dead when you're flying around beating up bad guys. When that happens, he'll start showing up in *Avengers* again."

Namor was once a member of the Marvel Universe's premier Golden Age super-hero team, the Invaders. With Byrne's recent revival of the original Human Torch in the pages of *West Coast Avengers*, that team's three main stalwarts—the Torch, Captain America and the Sub-Mariner—are once again all on active duty. Is a reunion in the offing?

"We're planning a three-part crossover that will probably run from *Captain America* to *Sub-Mariner* to *West Coast Avengers*, that will put the Invaders back together, at least temporarily. It's not a launching of a new series, just sort of 'Wouldn't it be fun to have these guys hanging out together?' " Byrne reports. "And, in the fifth issue of Namor's own book, several Avengers will guest-star and Cap, the Torch and Namor will keep just missing each other. That will be an almost-Invaders reunion—but not quite."

Namor's co-star cousin, Namorita, also has a group book she'll be appearing in soon, *The New Warriors*, a team recently introduced in the pages of *Thor* during the "Acts of Vengeance" storyline. Byrne says he'll mostly be ignoring Namorita's appearances there, at least for the time being. "I even have Namor sending Namorita off to do something so that she won't get involved in battle," Byrne says, "because he doesn't think of her as a warrior. He thinks of her as his cute little cousin. I think he's a bit of a chauvinist, ol' Namor; he doesn't quite realize that the ladies can be just as tough as he can, even though he has been married to a couple of tough ladies.

"One of the things that intrigues me about this book is that there's a great deal of the Marvel Universe that can be tapped into," Byrne comments. "I'm doing some stuff with Roxxon, so they'll be some interplay with that well-established Marvel company. In addition, though there's nothing definite yet, we'll probably see Sub-Mariner and Iron Man in contention, because a distant arm of Oracle and a distant arm of Tony Stark's corporation will come to blows—trying to buy each other out or something—and it will filter its way back to the top. Then, we'll have superheroes fighting each other, because this is comic books," he laughs.

"That's something I want to emphasize for the readers: They will *not* be reading 22 pages of scenes set in board rooms," Byrne stresses. "It's got the traditional amount of guys punching each other on the nose; it's just their reasons for punching each other on the nose will be different. I played with this a little with Lex Luthor in *Superman:* a big businessman but in a comic-book sense, so he takes a super-villain approach. Namor will be coming up against much the same kind of thing. This will not be a course in economics."

John Byrne points out that nearly every artist and writer in comics gets characterized by his last assignment. "So far, I'm having fun with *Namor the Sub-Mariner*," he says. "I always have to point out that when I say, 'I'm having fun with it,' that doesn't mean it's a funny book. 'Oh, you mean it's like *She-Hulk*!' people say. No, no, no! This time the humor *won't* be intentional." CS

By ERIC NIDEROST

ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS

Popularizing history has never been an easy task. Turned off by boring high school or college classes, many people think of the past as a dry recitation of facts with little or no relevance to today.

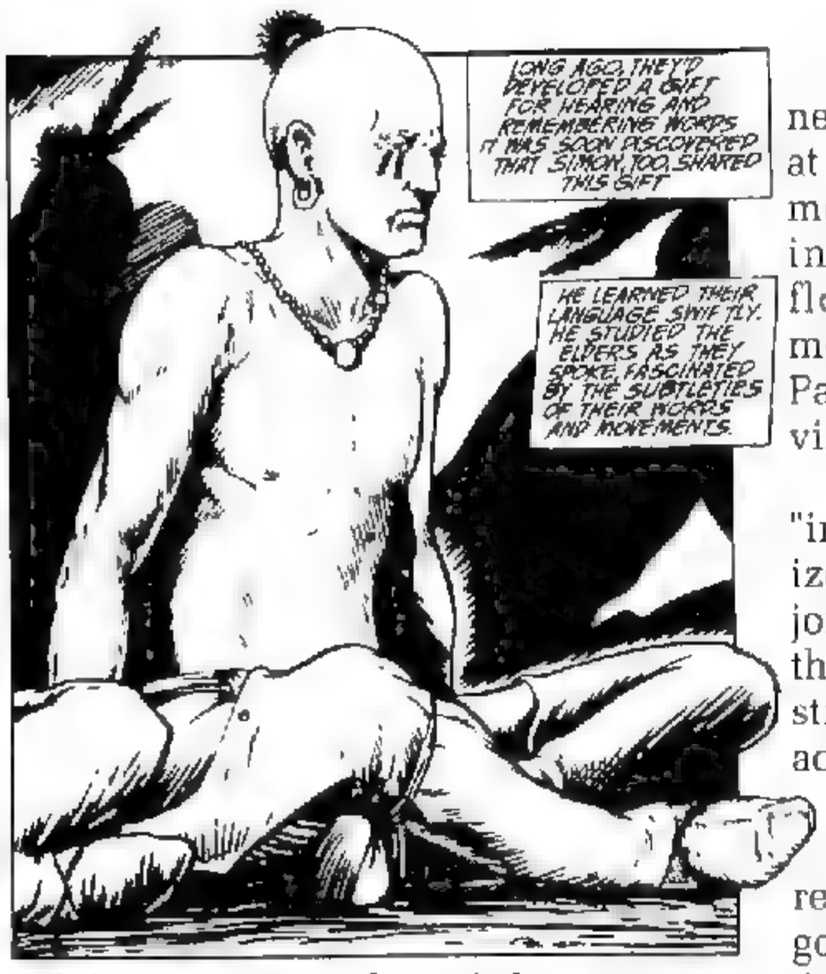
Writer/artist Tim Truman hopes to reverse that perception with his *Wilderness* series. Produced by 4Winds Publishing Group, *Wilderness* will consist of two graphic novels. The first, subtitled *The Borderland*, is already out, with its companion book *The Bloody Ground* to follow shortly.

The *Wilderness* series chronicles the life and times of Simon Girty, a frontiersman who lived during the American Revolution in the latter half of the 18th century. Though nearly forgotten today, Girty was often characterized as one of the worst villains ever to draw breath, a murderer, torturer and traitor to the cause.

Taking a well-deserved break from the drawing board, Truman is happy to talk about *Wilderness* while relaxing at his Lancaster, Pennsylvania home. At first glance, a historical series might seem a departure, coming as it does on the heels of his highly successful *Hawkworld* Prestige series for DC (CS #8), not to mention *Scout* (CS #5), an apocalyptic Apache tale.

But appearances are deceiving. "Actually," Truman begins, "I've been wanting to do a historical book for about 10 years. Once, I happened to go to a state park—it was one of George Washington's Revolutionary encampments at Morristown, NJ—and all they had available were these little pamphlets filled with textbook-style materials.

"Simon Girty is *not* the entirely black villain of the history books."


LONG AGO, THEY'D DEVELOPED A GIFT FOR HEARING AND REMEMBERING WORDS. IT WAS SOON DISCOVERED THAT SIMON, TOO, SHARED THIS GIFT.
HE LEARNED THEIR LANGUAGE SWIFTLY. HE STUDIED THE ELDERS AS THEY SPOKE, FASCINATED BY THE SUBTLETIES OF THEIR WORDS AND MOVEMENTS.

All Wilderness Art: Timothy Truman

While Tim Truman has tried to present the events as factually as possible, he had no basis for Girty's adoption, so he relied on other similar ceremonies.

"I thought to myself, 'If I were a little kid, would I like these?' There was no pizazz, nothing that would make me want to learn more. So, that's what started me on the quest of doing an historical book."

Still, the American Revolution has never caught the public's imagination, at least not as the Civil War has. Even movies about America's struggle for independence from Britain have flopped, notably Hugh Hudson's megabomb *Revolution*, starring Al Pacino. And why Girty, obscure and a villain to boot?

"Well," the comic creator allows, "in most accounts, Girty is characterized as a renegade and barbarian who joined the Indians, burned people at the stake, and so on. He's one of those strange, colorful characters you come across in history books if you do any reading about the frontier.'

But it was one particular book that really sparked Truman's interest and got the creative juices flowing. "I read Allan Eckert's *The Frontiersman*," the writer/artist recalls, "and he showed Girty in a different light. It made me begin to question all the other accounts that I had read."

Born on the Pennsylvania frontier in 1741, Simon Girty was captured and eventually adopted by the Seneca Indians when he was still a teenager. But his real notoriety began during the Revolution, when Britain's 13 rebellious colonies broke away and established the infant United States. Since Girty took the side of the British and their Indian allies, he was doubly damned as a traitor.

"At first," Truman confesses, "I was neutral about Girty, and thought of him merely as an interesting villain. In terms of my [first] book's slant, I'm not sure how heroic my portrayal of him is. But one thing's for sure—he's *not* the entirely black villain of the history books. By the last page and the last panel, I suppose I've made him more heroic than I would have expected."

Truman's conversion to Girty fandom was molded in part by his extensive research. "Well," jokes the comic creator, "*Wilderness: The Borderland* is the only comic book I know with a two-page bibliography! It took me about two years to do all the research, it's not a question of what I covered but what I *didn't* cover! I also took a 2,000-mile research trip and visited many of the actual sites associated with Girty along the way."

And the writer/penciller feels, he gained fresh insights into Girty's character as he went along. "You have to understand the traumas Girty went through as a child, and also in middle age, to really understand him. First, he saw his father killed before his eyes. Then, he witnessed his stepfather being burned alive by the Indians.

"Here was a man who was looking for a father figure. He also was looking for a purpose in life, which was accomplished when he became an interpreter at Fort Pitt. But when the Revolution broke out, *that* was taken away from him, too. All his friends turned against him, particularly after he stood by and watched the Indians burn Colonel William Crawford. After that, he was a hunted man, and he became very embittered."

It's one thing to do research, quite another to visually re-create the world of the past with accuracy. There have been a number of historical comics and comic strips over the years which, because they were fiction, took liberties, mixing styles and periods in clothing, weapons and other details of everyday life. With this project, Truman was determined to be authentic as well as entertaining.

All Wilderness Art: Trademark & Copyright 1989 Timothy Truman

For period costuming, Truman relied on magazines written by "buckskinning" hobbyists and other experts.

The artist began his quest for accuracy with Girty himself. Truman comments, "Girty was never drawn from life, so no true likeness survives. I had to go by written descriptions of him, but they vary widely. In the end, I had to base my work on my own mental picture of Girty. Sort of a symbol of Girty, capturing his spirit."

In terms of attire, Truman did take another minor liberty. From Daniel Boone to Davy Crockett, early American frontiersmen are almost always shown as wearing coonskin caps. They *were* worn, but not so frequently, because coonskin harbored regiments of fleas! Nevertheless, Truman admits, "I have Girty wearing a coonskin cap as a kind of visual ID. It sets him apart from the others, and I did come across a passage that said he wore something like it."

Period dress was hard to reconstruct, too, but Truman stumbled upon an invaluable resource—buckskinner magazines. "Buckskinners," the scribe elaborates, "are modern-day hunters and weapons enthusiasts who like to re-create the early American period as closely as possible. These guys devote *lifetimes* to research."

Through buckskinning magazines, and his own exhaustive probings, Truman managed to evoke the world of the Eastern Indians, tribes not as famous as the West's Sioux and Cheyenne. "One of the most *disheartening* things," the artist complains, "is that very little has ever been put together on the life, customs and dress of the Iroquois. I had *three* pictorial books of recent origin that I relied on, and again, these were made by buckskinners.

"I found minor flaws in the standard Indian works of such prestigious organizations as the Smithsonian. For example, Indian leggings rarely went higher than six to eight inches above the knee, illustrations in such books as the Smithsonian's show them much too high. *That's* how picky I got! I took into consideration the period I was dealing with. If it was pre-French and Indian War [1750s], I showed them in full native dress. Later, with white contact, I mixed the clothing, adding gingham shirts."

Frontier warfare was brutal and bloody in the extreme. In war, Indians killed their prisoners slowly, using all the fiendish torments their minds could devise. Probably the most notorious incident in Girty's life occurred when he witnessed the torture and death of a fellow white, William Crawford. His approval, or at least acquiescence, of Crawford's grisly death blackened Girty's name forever. Truman was faced with a seemingly insurmountable problem: how to depict Crawford's death and the other violence in the series without becoming too graphic.

WELL ?
CONNEL
CONNEL GETS THE HAIR
LET'S LEAVE IT TO THE SCOUT, I SAY!
WHAT SAY YOU, GIRTY ?! WHO GET'S THE HAIR ?!
IT HAD BEEN A LONG CAMPAIGN
GENERAL HAND, THE NEW COMMANDER AT PITT, HAD LEARNED THAT THE BRITISH HAD STORED ARMS AT THE INDIAN VILLAGE OF CAYUGA. HE'D LAUNCHED A WINTER RAID, HOPING TO CATCH HIS ENEMIES BY SURPRISE.
SOON AFTER THE ARMY SET OUT, THE WEATHER HAD WARMED. THE WINTER SNOW MELTED. SUDDEN RAINS FLOODED THE CREEKS AND RIVERS AND TURNED THE GROUND INTO AN ANKLE-BREAKING, MUDDY SLUDGE.
HAND NEVER REACHED THE STORES AT CAYUGA
©1989 TIMOTHY TRUMAN

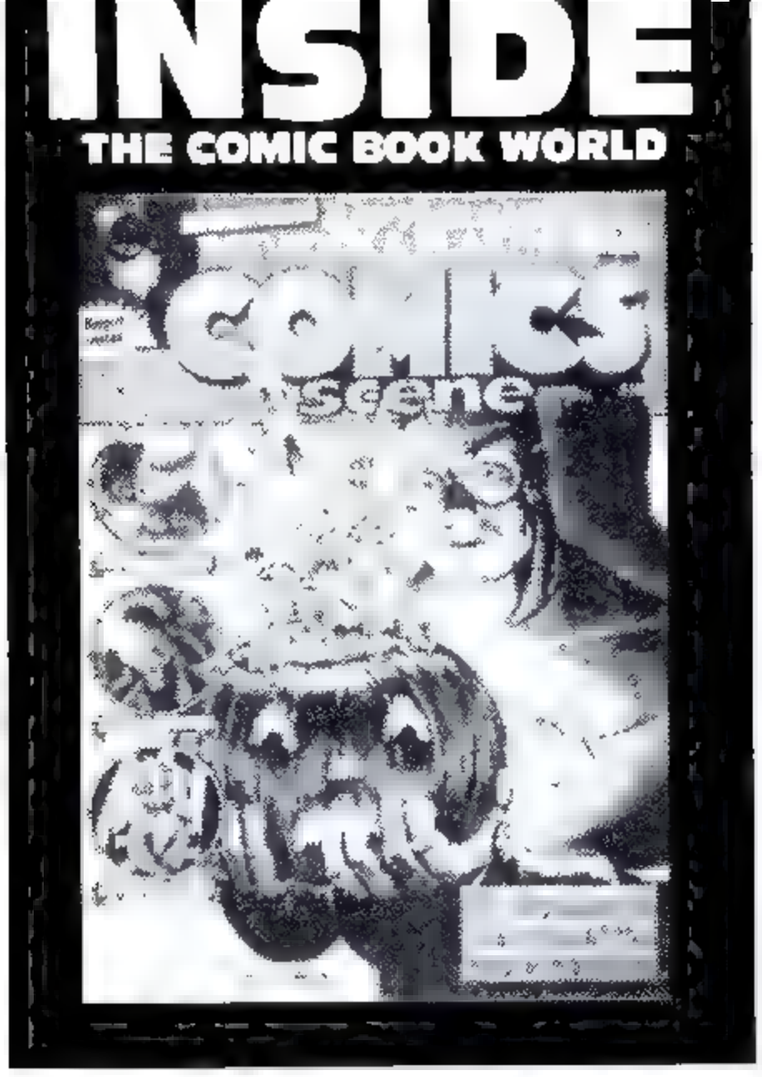
With no existing portraits of the frontiersman, Truman turned to his own interpretation, "a symbol of Girty."

To partially solve the problem, Truman resorted to a "diminishing panels" technique. Analogous to a film close-up, the comic panels grow successively smaller as they focus ever nearer to their subject. "It's a cinematic technique," Truman confirms. "To my way of thinking, the guy who developed the style is *Sgt. Rock*'s Joe Kubert, whom I greatly admire.

'It's a kind of special effect, and I never want to overdo it. I use it very sparingly, only when I want to drive a point home, or want to hit the reader in the face with information, a mood or an emotion."

Truman refuses to speculate on the success of his *Wilderness* series. "We'll find out, I guess!" he says with a hearty chuckle. "Historical books have been tried before, though perhaps without much success. What I've tried to do is use all the elements of *Scout* and *Hawkworld*, elements of story and drama, and apply them to *Wilderness*. My object is to *entertain* as well as inform. The major difference is that I'm basing these elements of drama and

(continued on page 32)



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Wilderness

(continued from page 31)

story on events that really happened."

The other series had little direct effect on *Wilderness*' production. Truman remarks, "though *Scout* did have some influence. As he puts it, "*Scout* showed me, as nothing else did, the real value of good research."

He also resisted the temptation to fictionalize elements of the story. Simon Girty's life has enough adventure and violence to satisfy the most jaded reader, so there was no reason to embroider an already colorful tapestry of events. Candidly, though, Truman admits to one sequence that was technically a product of the author's imagination—the adoption ceremony of the renegade.

'Girty was captured at 15, and eventually adopted by the Senecas. I wanted to show the actual process of adoption, to reveal some ethnic detail. Since I technically didn't know how he was adopted, I relied on similar accounts of other adoptions and applied them to Girty."

There were, however, many problems associated with translating real history into comic-book form. "This was the most intense, *painstaking* thing I've done," Truman admits with a smile. "It's so easy to fall into a dry retelling of facts, so I had to keep the story moving at a steady clip. And yet, it's such a complex period and Girty was such a complex man."

Though Girty was undoubtedly colorful, why should contemporary readers want to learn about an obscure 18th century frontiersman? Why should comic buyers plunk down hard-earned cash? Why should they even care?

"First of all," Truman details, "readers can learn things aren't so clear cut, aren't always so black and white. Somebody can seem very dastardly when he's broken down into a two-paragraph excerpt in some book! But once you get into the facts, things look different.

"I began the project wondering if I would want to meet Girty, if I had a time machine and could transport myself back 200 years. By the time I finished the last page of book one, I could answer, 'Yes, I would want to meet him.' I *like* him!"

Finally, Tim Truman hopes readers will gain fresh perspectives on how we make our heroes and villains. "I once came across a quote that said, 'There are seldom any heroes or villains in history; we craft our villains.' In other words, we create villains to have someone to blame things on. That's the ultimate message of *Wilderness*." CS

Turtles

(continued from page 12)

Duck, which just could open its mouth and quack.'

To listen to Tom Gray talk, he has it all figured out. His marketing strategy is especially risky and un-Hollywood.

"We purposely skewed this movie for an *older* audience. We know that the kids would come, but we really wanted to make it for the teenage and university level. The script is very, very hip and very timely. We will probably end up with a PG-13 or a PG. We don't want an R and we don't want a G. A G rating would kill us The fighting will be very stylistic. No blood, no heads coming off. Casey and April are going to give the audience a sense that there's a little romance building between them."

To help sell this picture to all audiences, the Turtles will be showcased against a carefully thought-out backdrop conceptualized by production designer Roy Forge Smith, a veteran of *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure.* One of the most critical decisions they faced was whether to go with realistic or comic book-style sets.

"That was something we really debated with the production designer," Gray says. "What we have is a combination of absolute realism. When you see the sewer system, it's a set, but it's what people would imagine the New York subway sewer system looks like. There are pipes, bricks, moss, algae. It's so realistic I couldn't believe it. I worked for many years for United Artists and I've been to Pinewood to see the James Bond sets and it's every bit as good or better than Bond's."

Whether the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles are as spectacularly successful on the silver screen as they have been in every other realm they've tried to conquer remains to be seen. However, their Golden Harvest incarnation has already satisfied two critical members of the audience.

"I assured Kevin and Peter up front that no matter what we did, we would not set out to get away from what they created,' Tom Gray concludes. "We didn't want to be the ones to destroy their invention, and they can tell you in all honesty we far exceeded their expectations. They both came down here, and they absolutely freaked. They are just so over the Moon. Kevin Eastman has a small role in the picture. We offered it to Peter, but Peter declined. Kevin said, 'I'll do it!' So, we said, 'OK, you're a garbage man.' If the aficionados are out there, it's spot the Kevin shot." CS

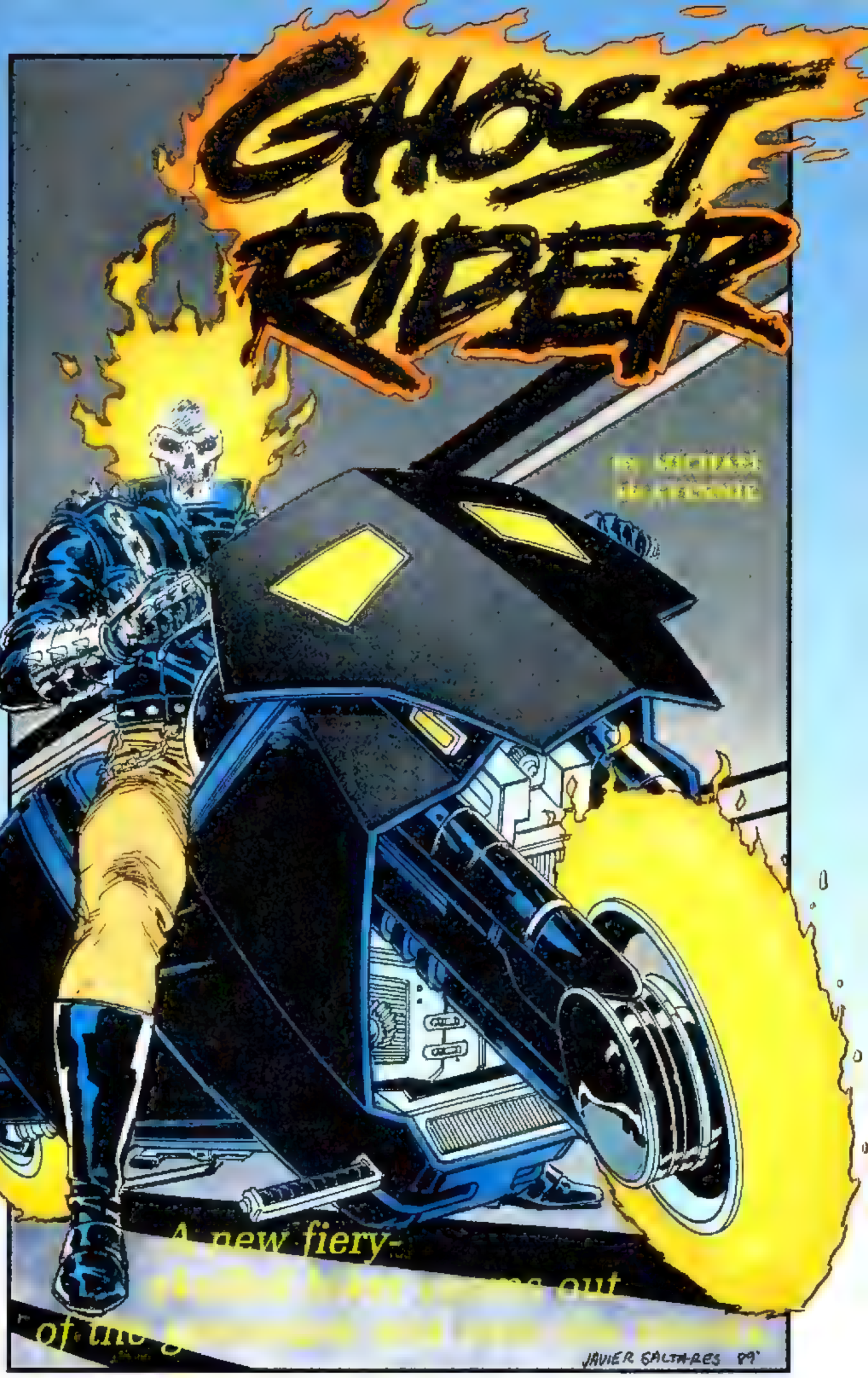
The cycle begins anew—the cycle of the Ghost Rider, that is. After a several year absence, Marvel Comics' second favorite hothead returns this March in his own series—for the first time.

Perhaps it should be pointed out that while this new Ghost Rider is making his premier appearance, it is the third time Marvel has published a title featuring a character with that name. The first Ghost Rider starred in a Western-based series for Magazine Enterprises during the '50s until Marvel resurrected the hero for their own cowboy titles in the '60s. A more widely-known, fiery-skulled "successor" to the name appeared throughout the '70s and '80s. With that in mind, what can people expect from this Ghost Rider of the '90s? Plenty, promises Howard Mackie, writer of the new series.

"I've always had an interest in the visual aspect that came with the last Ghost Rider," Mackie says. "I read the old series sporadically years ago, and the idea of a guy with a flaming skull on a motorcycle stuck in my mind. It was a *great* idea, and I decided to do an updated version."

According to Mackie, however, the flaming skull will be the *only* element taken from the previous *Ghost Rider* title. Everything else will be different.

"In the last series," he explains, "Johnny Blaze was possessed by the spirit of Zarathos. When Zarathos felt it was time to be released, he took charge of Blaze, created a 'mystic motorcycle out of hellfire, and Ghost Rider would go off to do his schtick. In *my* version, there already is a motorcycle. It's a pretty standard American-made motorcycle, except that the motorcycle *itself* is possessed. Whenever innocent blood is spilled, the bike kicks in its transformation. Its gas cap starts glowing, and when Dan Ketch puts his hands on the cap, he's transformed into the Ghost Rider."



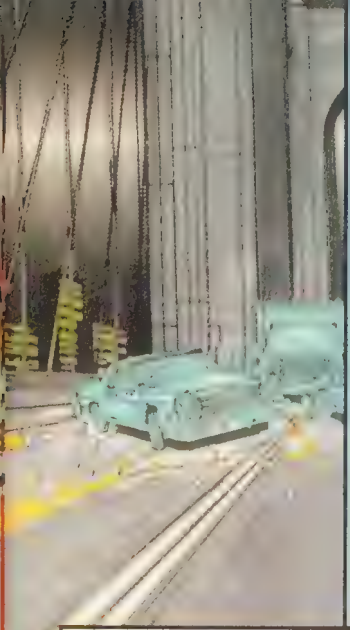
The emphasis on the motorcycle is what series artist Javier Saltares believes to be an integral part of the new *Ghost Rider*. "I *never* thought the last Ghost Rider was done properly," admits Saltares, whose work has appeared in *DC Talent Showcase*, last year's *Spider-Man* annual, and *Marvel Comics Presents* (an eight-part Wonder Man story). "I always thought that they should have played the bike up more than Johnny Blaze, which is something that Howard and I will be doing in this book.

"I did like the concept of this guy on a motorcycle," he remarks, "and I thought they came up with that idea, figuring that most young guys like motorcycles. They ruined the idea, though, when they turned it into a *flaming* bike, which I thought took away all the streamline technology that made it so attractive. So, when I was asked to do the new book, I wanted the bike to be a solid piece of machinery. I knew that the bike had to have something phenomenal happening with it, so I kept just the wheels on fire."

The motorcycle wasn't the only artistic transformation. "Both Howard and I wanted Ghost Rider to be more updated, more the leather-and-spike type," Saltares says. "We want to play up the aspect of a biker, a real rough-tough type, rather than just a superhero on a motorcycle."

But do clothes make the man, or the Ghost Rider, for that matter? While he may look like and appear to be just another biker with a flammable cranium, he's also what Mackie describes as "The Spirit of Vengeance."

All Ghost Rider Arts Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1990 Marvel Entertainment Group



He tends to be very exacting in obtaining vengeance," says the author, whose writing credits include *Avengers Spotlight* tales and a recent eight-part Havok story for *Marvel Comics Presents*. "He's basically a good guy, and he doesn't hurt any innocent people ever. I haven't had him kill, and I don't plan on having him kill anyone yet, but he'll do everything up to that point. For now, he's more interested in making people pay for their crimes."

Unlike his "predecessors," this modern-day Ghost Rider doesn't resort to such antiquated devices as six-guns or old-hat parlor tricks like hellfire to carry out his brand of Spectre-like justice. Rather, he uses a totally different power called the "Penance Stare." "Basically," Mackie describes, "what he does is pull people up close to him, stares into their eyes, and they feel all of the pain they've inflicted on others in the past. For example, a killer would feel the pain of death without actually dying.

"In terms of power, Ghost Rider is pretty much in the same class as Spider-Man," he continues. "He's very much like the Terminator and the Juggernaut: once he sets out on a goal, he just keeps on going, no matter what happens. He's pretty invulnerable, and while he can be hurt, he just won't be stopped.

One possible reason why he won't be stopped may be the fact that, unlike the previous series, Mackie has no intention of bringing anything else supernatural into the new *Ghost Rider*. "The way I've visualized things from the beginning," he states, "was that the Ghost Rider would be the *only* supernatural force in the book. The stories themselves are more grim and crime-oriented. I'm not a big supernatural expert, and I wouldn't want to pretend to be. I certainly wouldn't want to have to use *Dr. Strange* as my 'bible' to the supernatural. The Ghost Rider will just go against mostly killers."

Even if the Ghost Rider won't confront any occult forces in the near future, Mackie promises that the character will be up to his flaming neck in crime. According to the writer, the first issue will explain how Dan Ketch becomes the Spirit of Vengeance. "Dan and his sister, Barbara, stumble across a murder in the cemetery. They're discovered by the murderers, and Barbara hurts herself as they try to escape. Dan finds a motorcycle in a junkyard near the cemetery, his sister's innocent blood is spilled, and he becomes Ghost Rider.

"We'll also be introduced to Deathwatch, a new character who will probably be a major villain for Ghost Rider in the future," he adds. "In this particular storyline, he's at odds with the Kingpin, who also appears in the issue. Both are attempting to retrieve three missing canisters of a deadly neuro-toxin. Kingpin wants to prevent them from being used, while Deathwatch has been hired by a terrorist organization to use them in destroying New York City. A supporting group I've dropped into the book, a teenage gang known as the Cypress Pool Jokers, finds the canisters and hides them in the cemetery, not knowing what they really are. The next two issues deal with Deathwatch and Kingpin's search for the canisters, with Ghost Rider caught in the middle."

The fourth issue will focus on Dan's attempts to get rid of the cycle, his discovery that the motorcycle has become an addiction for him, and Ghost Rider's run-in with Mr. Hyde. A subplot dealing with child abduction will also begin that issue.

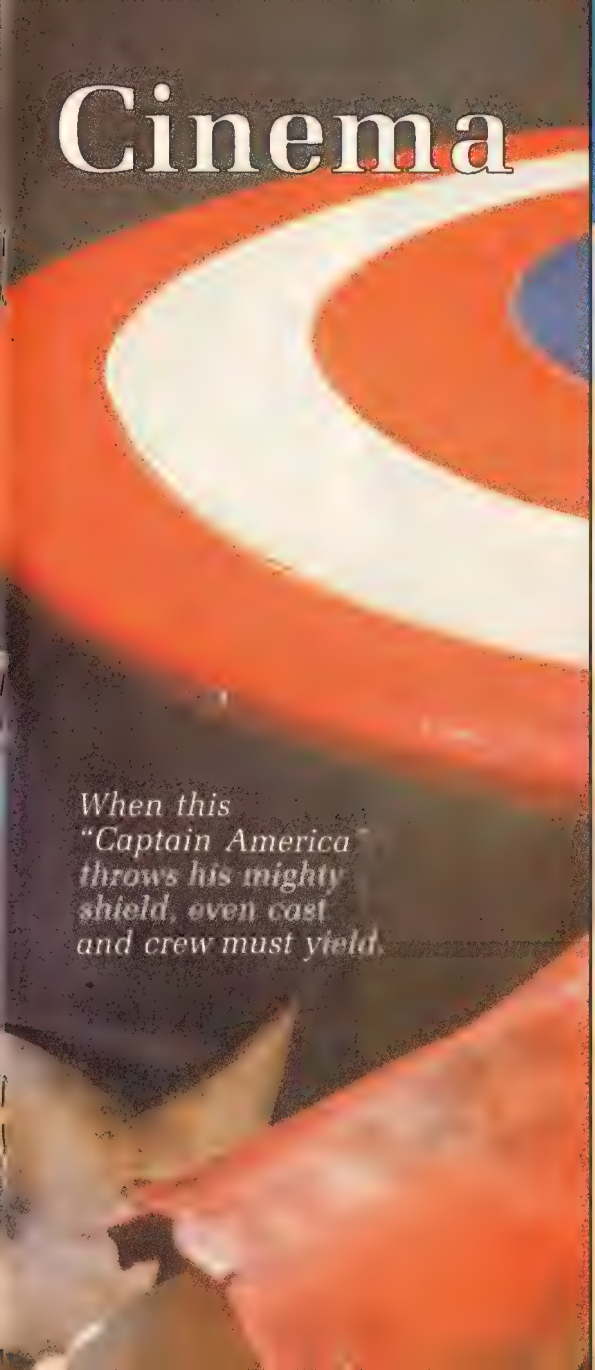
"Issues #5 and #6," says Mackie, 'will involve the Punisher and 'wilding' gangs in the streets of Brooklyn, and the villains in that story will be

(continued on page 66)

All Ghost Rider Art: Javier Saltares

Star-Spangled

Cinema



When this "Captain America" throws his mighty shield, even cast and crew must yield.

By MARC SHAPIRO

Albert Pyun recalls not being in the greatest frame of mind when he first laid eyes on the *Captain America* script.

"I've always been a jaded, cynical person," admits the director whose credits, which include *Sword and the Sorcerer*, *Cyborg* and *Alien from L.A.*, might have contributed to that cynicism. "But when I read the script, I felt guilty for having those thoughts and immediately set my mind to the fact that the world is really a pretty good place."

Pyun's newfound attitude about the script is echoed, in one form or another, by almost everybody connected with the long-anticipated adaptation of the Joe Simon/Jack Kirby creation *Captain America*. There are no superpatriots on this $7.5 million, 21st Century Productions film, but talking to people on both sides of the camera invariably elicits comments like, "This is what America is meant to be," and "This film is about people believing in things and doing something about that belief."

And so, while most people connected to *Captain America: The Movie* concede to "some quick research" or "asking my parents" as their only knowledge of comicdom's greatest, most fervent flag-waver, their hearts, at least, seem to be in the right place to make this film a reality.

For the record, Captain America first appeared in his own title cover-dated March 1941, apparently on sale in 1940, months before Pearl Harbor. After the war, he battled some stateside menaces for a time before retiring from service. During the '50s, he was briefly recalled to active duty to crush the Commies, and in 1964, Marvel Comics finally brought him back with a permanent assignment. On the cinematic side, Dick Purcell did a workmanlike job of playing Cap in a 1940s serial while Rob Brown fought a losing battle in two disappointing *Captain America* TV movie pilots during the '70s.

Recently, Cannon Films purchased the film rights to Captain America and, when producer Menahem Golan split off to form 21st Century Films, he took the rights to both this project and *Spider-Man*, which Pyun was also set to direct (CS #4), with him.

Salinger in the title role and Scott Paulin as the Red Skull. The cast includes Kim Gillingham, Ronny Cox, Ned Beatty, Darren McGavin, Michael Nouri and Melinda Dillon. The movie filmed over 60 days in Rovigno, Yugoslavia, with additional lensing in California and Alaska. It spotlights the makeup skills of Greg Cannom and the special FX of Frazee and Frazee Special Effects

For Stephen Tolkin, Captain America began with the writer being essentially in the dark. "I barely knew who Captain America was," says a candid Tolkin whose comic tastes tend to run more toward

"The script called for the Red Skull to be played as an Italian so I had to develop an accent," reports Paulin.

Captain America, scripted by Stephen Tolkin, begins in 1941 where physical weakling Steve Rogers, attempting to enlist in World War II, is declared 4-F. Yet only a few hours later, he is chosen as a guinea pig for a top secret, experimental program called Operation Re-Birth.

Rogers is injected with a serum that increases his strength more than a hundred times. He is issued his red, white and blue uniform and told that his mission will be an ongoing battle against the enemies of freedom and democracy.

Captain America's first assignment takes him into Hitler's Germany and into direct conflict with the Axis powers' own super-soldier, the vicious Red Skull. During a ferocious battle, the Red Skull succeeds in overpowering Captain America and tying him to a rocket filled with a deadly virus aimed at the USA. Captain America manages to alter the rocket's course in mid-flight to the North Pole where the rocket crashes and our hero is presumed lost.

More than forty years later, Captain America is found frozen inside a glacier, still very much alive. Our hero is then faced with having to adjust to life in the '90s while continuing his titanic war with the still living, still threatening Red Skull.

Captain America stars Matt

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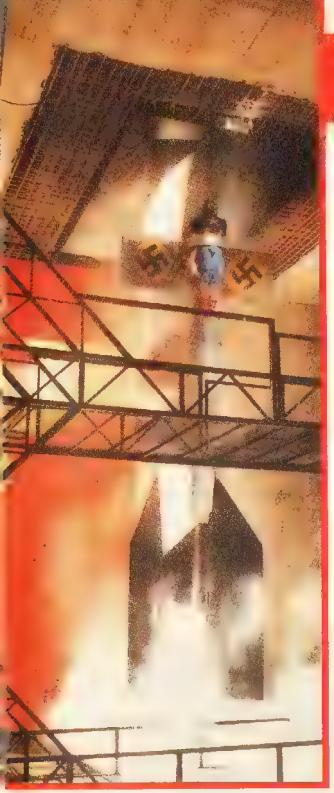
Captain America Characters: Trademark Marvel Entertainment Group



Archie and *Superman*. "I was not a big Captain America fan."

And so, it's ironic that Tolkin's inspiration for the script came from a mid-60s Captain America story.

"There is a panel on one page where Captain America has come back to the '60s," relates Tolkin. "He's looking anguished and there was a thought balloon that said something to the effect of: 'Why are these people so rebellious? Why doesn't anything matter to them?' The germ of the idea came from that and I ran with it.

Tolkin wrote what he considers "a very complicated story" in one month. He knew the script had to be mainstream in design and had to, in a sense, conform to a formula.

"But that didn't necessarily make the job easy," says the writer. 'Captain America is not a superhero with outrageous powers, and the fact that there have already been many films about comic-book characters only made the job harder.

"Stan Lee and I got together during the final rewrite and he suggested things that would make Captain America less a superhero and more human. We took out quite a few super-power moments. Things like Captain America putting his fist through steel walls were eliminated in order to make him more human and more unsure of himself.

"It was those moments of humanity that everybody felt were more in the tradition of the Captain America that everyone knew."

Tom Karnowski, the film's line producer, was equally intent on keeping the movie version of *Captain America* in the comic book tradition. But keeping faithful meant trouble when it came to casting the title role.

"When we read the script, we thought, 'How in the hell are we going to do this?' " recalls Karnowski, who has worked with Pyun on a number of projects including *Cyborg* and *Radioactive Dreams*. "We had to show this guy in the beginning of the film as 4-F with a bad leg who, by mid-film, is real big and completely physical. We had the choice of going with two different actors and running the risk of losing audience association with the character or we could find an actor with physical stature who could act out both roles.

"We went with the latter and basically looked at everybody. We tested actors, non-actors, sports figures. Matt came along fairly late in the casting, but he immediately caught everybody's attention."

And though the producer describes the film as "a synthesized version of the comic-book legend," he still must confess that he is mostly familiar with the character's history through its earlier screen and video forms.

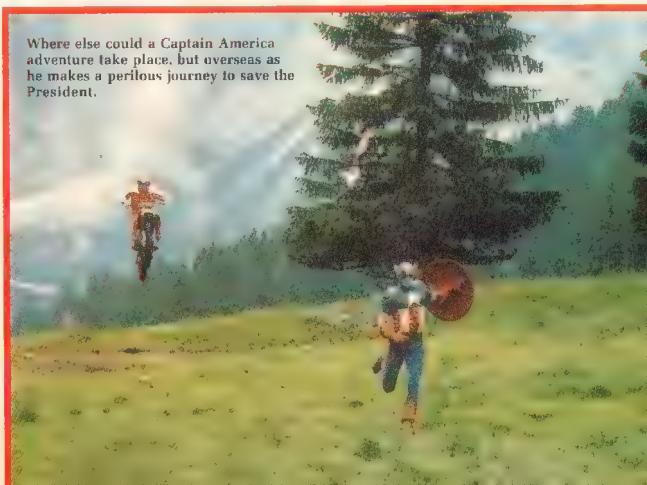
"But as far as Albert and I were concerned, those things didn't make any difference in our approach to making *this* film. The script simply gave us a good feeling about what America could be. We liked the idea of having a guy from the '40s, when good and bad were clearly defined, trying to adjust to life today when good and bad are not so black and white.

Karnowski is also fond of the notion of the film showing "that a hero can still be a hero." Yet will a cynical moviegoing audience be willing to respond to a film that is wrapped so tightly in the flag?

"*Captain America* shows a more '80s-'90s brand of patriotism rather than presenting those virtues in a '40s way. This film shows what America was meant to be and what has just gotten lost in the shuffle."

Scott Paulin has been seen in *The Right Stuff*. He's been seen in *Cat People* and *The Ninth Configuration*. "But Albert basically had to shove me down a lot of people's throats in order to convince them that I was right for the part of the Red Skull," says the actor. "The reason being that, despite the fact that I've always worked, people didn't know me.

Paulin, most recently on display in *Turner and Hooch*, *Johnny Handsome* and *From Hollywood to*



Where else could a Captain America adventure take place, but overseas as he makes a perilous journey to save the President.

Steve Rogers (Salinger) has the best of both worlds. Having lost his first love, he finds romance with her daughter Sharon (Kim Gillingham).

Deadwood, is the rare Captain America aficionado on this project, having read the hero's exploits "for years." And so, he immediately realized that the Skull was in his estimation, the film's best part

'The Red Skull is a fascinating, nearly complete portrayal of a villain,' acknowledges Paulin. "He has been torn from his family as a child, turned into this deformed, demonic character and, through his evil deeds has all but forgotten his past. Red Skull, like Captain America, comes into being due to an enormous, apocalyptic event. But while Steve Rogers transformation resulted in something positive, Red Skull's turned into something totally evil."

Paulin's saying yes to the Red Skull resulted in extensive research that went well beyond a trip to the nearest comic-book shop.

"The script called for the Red Skull to be played as an *Italian* so I had to develop an accent. His lone link with his past is the piano which he plays constantly. I don t play the piano so I had to learn. Much of the research was technical and psychological. I had to deal with the idea of performing in makeup, character choices and how to project what I know as an actor out from behind a mask."

Paulin claims that the preparation was worth the effort as the Skull has a lion's share of outstanding scenes.

"There s this sequence where the Red Skull makes a speech while standing on the top of his fortress and looking out over the ocean that's real powerful," explains Paulin. "The final battle sequences between Captain America and the Red Skull are extraordinary—non-stop fistfights and gun battles. I did most of my own stunts, which wasn t that difficult because I ve done those kinds of things throughout my career

'But the best thing was just being in Yugoslavia, playing out this extraordinary story that spans different ages in villages that were themselves thousands of years old. It was amazingly surrealistic and I think people will pick up on that.

What a sharp-eyed audience might also pick up on is that Paulin did many of his scenes with a broken hand. How he got the busted paw was both painful and funny.

He explains, "I had been waiting a long time in the makeup trailer for my scenes to begin and I was getting real uptight so I decided to go outside and et off some steam. Well, I went outside and started screaming and flailing my arms around and my hand hit the end of the makeup bus and broke in two places. They rushed me, in full Red Skull makeup, to a local hospital to get my hand set. They took me right through the emergency room. People took one look at me and were scared to death because they thought I had been in some kind of horrible accident. They rushed me right through without a wait

"I wonder why,' he laughs

From an FX point-of-view, *Captain America* has everything. 'We did snow, rain, fire, explosions, bullet hits, a rocket, the shield," says Terry Frazee whose company has done it all for such widely divergent credits as *The Blob* (1988) and *The A-Team*. And in typical filmmaking manner, they did it all on short notice

We got a week of pre-production,' sighs Frazee. 'Three days to fly to Yugoslavia to check out the locations, four days to get what we needed together and get it over there and set up for the first shot on that first day. But hey! That s Hollywood."

Frazee explains that most of the effects on the film are "your typical gags." But two effects, in particular, stand out as personal favorites.

"In this film, the shield basically has a life of its own, doing things like knocking down a motorcycle and cutting a gun in half. What we did was hook the shield onto wires for most of its flight and guide it to its target after cutting from a shot of Matt actually tossing it. We were lucky with Matt because he's a real good frisbee thrower and so we were able to get some real good shots of the shield beginning its flight before we cut in our stuff.

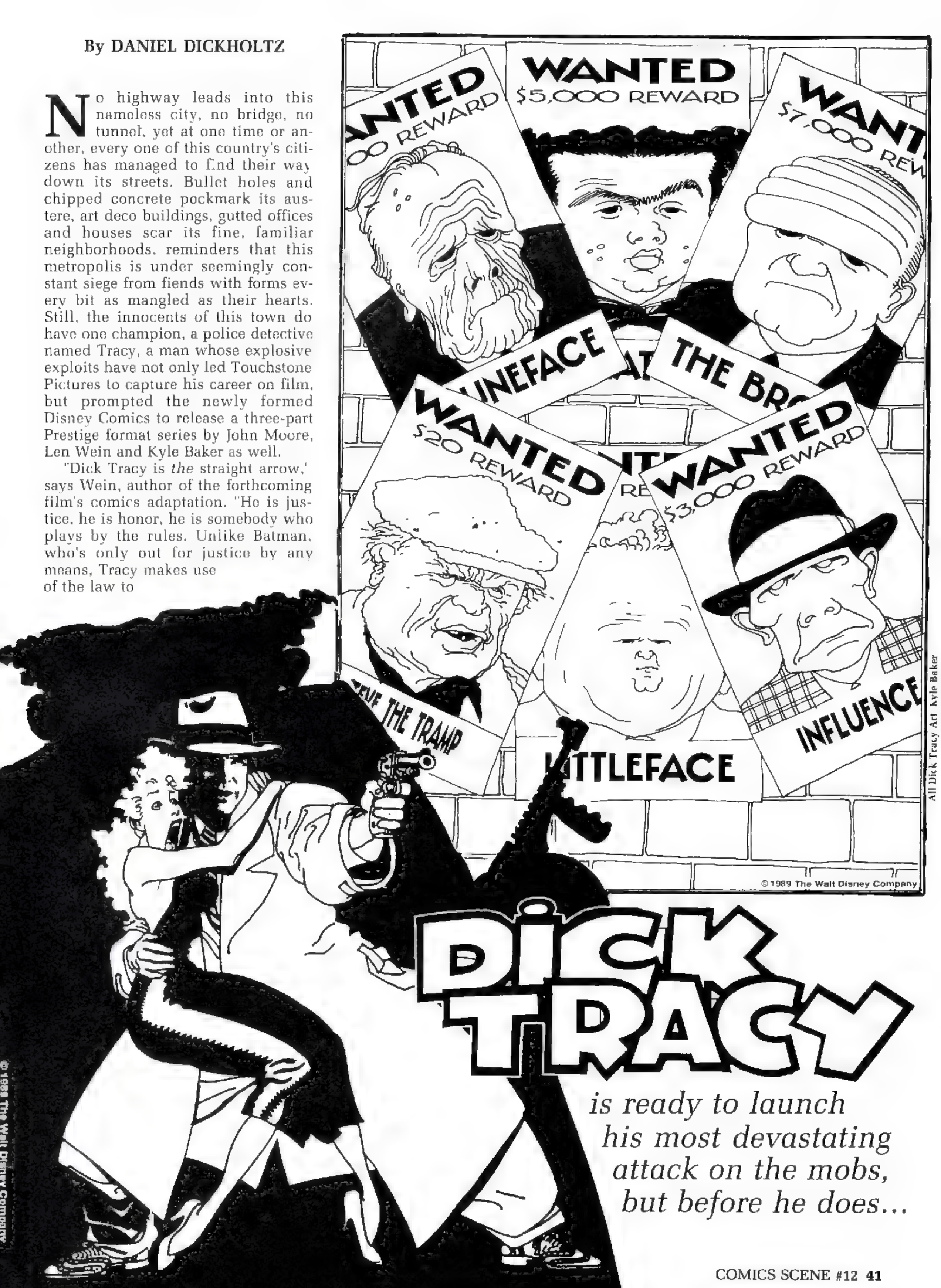
The rocket that carries Captain America to his icy tomb at the film s beginning was done with a full-sized, 35-foot long vehicle. "The rocket was

(continued on page 52)

By DANIEL DICKHOLTZ

No highway leads into this nameless city, no bridge, no tunnel, yet at one time or another, every one of this country's citizens has managed to find their way down its streets. Bullet holes and chipped concrete pockmark its austere, art deco buildings, gutted offices and houses scar its fine, familiar neighborhoods, reminders that this metropolis is under seemingly constant siege from fiends with forms every bit as mangled as their hearts. Still, the innocents of this town do have one champion, a police detective named Tracy, a man whose explosive exploits have not only led Touchstone Pictures to capture his career on film, but prompted the newly formed Disney Comics to release a three-part Prestige format series by John Moore, Len Wein and Kyle Baker as well.

"Dick Tracy is *the* straight arrow," says Wein, author of the forthcoming film's comics adaptation. "He is justice, he is honor, he is somebody who plays by the rules. Unlike Batman, who's only out for justice by any means, Tracy makes use of the law to



is ready to launch his most devastating attack on the mobs, but before he does...

All Dick Tracy Art Kyle Baker

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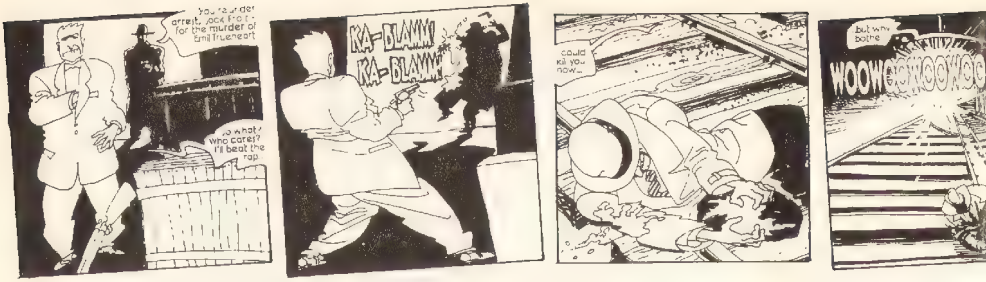


accomplish justice. He upholds the law and won't cross that line.'

"Tracy is really the classic Western icon," notes Moore, the writer of the series' other two volumes. "I mean, when the town's overrun by bad guys, he is the guy who has been given the badge. In this case, he already has the badge. I don't see him as the hardline proto-fascist cop that he became. Certainly, Tracy is an extremely right-wing character, which I would have trouble writing today, but in the '30s, understanding the preponderance of gangsters, I think Tracy is a good man with the strength to do what has to be done and with the moral focus and fortitude to get those things done. Kevin Costner's Eliot Ness, from Brian De Palma's *The Untouchables*, was really foremost in my mind.'

Unlike most movie tie-ins, this series will *not* follow its hero's escapades after the film's final moments and the comics version's last panels. Rather, the tommy gun-toting crime crusher's adventures, detailed in the first two books, "Big City Blues" and "Dick Tracy vs. the Underworld," will culminate in the adaptation.

"This is one of those projects where you *want* to lead to the movie, it being considered by many to be the highlight of this summer," Wein explains. 'We just wanted to help build excitement and interest in the strip and the character, and this seemed a reasonable way to do it. If we decide to do something to follow the film, *none* of that could appear until the fall.

'Also," remarks Moore, 'since the movie opens up with Tracy already established as a police detective, with a number of mobs and gangsters already established within the city, there was a great deal of back story to be addressed, so prequels made sense, even as *Batman* might have if the movie was the only context he existed in because there was still the question of when he put the costume on, why did he pick the costume, etc.

"The first plot concerns the dilemma Police Chief Brandon faces in dealing with the corruption that seems to be on all levels of city government and business. It also deals with the murder of Emil Trueheart, Tess' father, and how Tracy, who has been confined to a desk because of the influence of a very wealthy woman, ultimately becomes the solution to both problems."

One problem Moore himself faced was the fact that the filmmakers, in their desire to capture the spirit of Chester Gould's creation, have

Hunting his first mobster, a very Warren Beatty-ish Dick Tracy gets a close look at the underworld he faces.

brought together a convocation of criminals Tracy only battled individually over the course of his career. And setting their tale back in the 1930s, the era of Tracy's birth, has forced even villains like Pruneface, who was originally a Nazi spy, to become either hoodlums or crimelords capable of rivalling Big Boy Caprici, the movie's major menace.

After Moore sorted out the movie's mobsters' schemes, though, he found that he then "had to find other villains for Tracy to defeat" in his own stories. Consequently, would-be ganglord Ribs Mocca becomes "the first villain Tracy can take out,' while the Mole dominates the second book.

'The Mole is running an underground safehouse for criminals on the run, where he offers both refuge and the creation of a new identity, including plastic surgery, which is handled by yet another old *Tracy* character, Mad Doc Hump," Moore reveals. "While he's working for some of the gangsters by providing sanctuary for their hoods, the Mole is also basically setting up a bunch of hired thugs who are indebted to him because he knows who they are, where they've been and has that to hold over their heads. So, when Lips Manliss and Pruneface—Big Boy isn't a gang leader yet -finally kill each other off, the Mole's gang will be there to fill the vacuum."

And just as the second book shows Tracy's growing reputation 'as the lawman who can't be stopped, can't be bought,' so too does it detail Big Boy's climb to the gangland throne.

'When we first meet Big Boy, he's working for Lips Manliss as his torpedo, but Lips is not as in charge as he might think," Moore details. "Big Boy Caprici is a thug who has tried to better himself and speaks as if he has had elocution lessons, in that very arch, formal, Damon Runyon style, but Caprici's a guy who wants everything and is on his way to getting it."

Surprisingly, though, it wasn't any of Gould's grotesqueries that stole Moore's attention. "The most interesting thing for me and certainly, I think, in the screenplay is Tracy's relationship with Breathless Mahoney," the scribe confesses. The beauteous baddie "was probably the most fun character to write because in the two prequels, Breathless goes from being a small town girl fresh off the bus to being this really dangerous femme fatale night club singer. She was probably *the* most fun to write of the whole series.'

Still, with so many deviations from the strip's continuity made to accommodate the movie, one could easily wonder just how much of

"Tracy really *has* to exist in the '30s or '40s," Moore says. "He's very much a figure of the time he was created in."

Chester Gould remains in this *Dick Tracy*.

'We've tried to keep as much of what was originally there, insists Wein, whose editorial duties at Disney allowed him to "kibitz' with Moore's scripts. 'We *are* bound to the film as well, so we had to keep the characters in character and yet also not violate the movie we're ultimately going to adapt. It would look very strange for us to go happily along with the comic strip versions of some of those characters and then have to change them radically to adapt the film. So, we're walking that line."

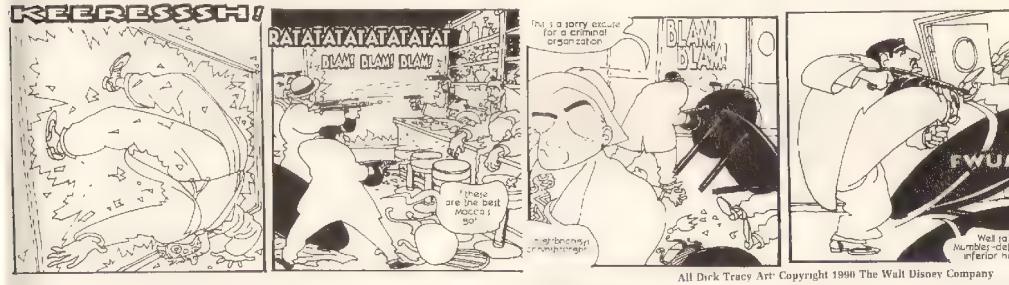
Says Moore, "I've tried to keep the hard edge of Chester Gould, both in terms of action and in terms of dialogue. I've tried to keep that kind of *noir* tone and some of Gould's black humor. The bizarre torture devices, the poetic endings the villains met that were really grisly and gruesome, I've tried to keep some of that. I feel that this should be taken as a *variation* on *Dick Tracy*, and I hope I'm faithful to the basics of who Tracy is, what he does and how he does it.'

However, as surprising as some of the alterations in the "*Tracy* canon," as Moore puts it, may be to the detective's devotees, Kyle Baker's idiosyncratic renderings of the classic figures could be just as shocking. Wein feels that as Chester Gould back in the '30s through the '70s was a consummate stylist, Kyle is one of the hottest young stylists around [today], and he brings a very singular view to what *Dick Tracy* is." Moore, having brought Baker to the project, agrees, but even he is unsure how readers may react.

'I don't know how it's going to be taken by the hardcore Chester Gould fans, especially with the fact that Dick Tracy is going to look like Warren Beatty, which I think is a *mistake*," he comments. 'But Kyle has done some *remarkably* interesting stuff with just a mind-boggling sense of black and white and shape and form in a very linear style that is as distinct as Chester Gould's but is *not* Gould's."

The deadliest threat to the daring policeman, though, may not come from any of his foes, but from an audience too young to recognize his a good story, and it has to be in a package that, while it may be referential to the past, is not reverential. You can't say, 'It was so good then. Let's go back and do that.' You have to say, 'What was good then still works.' So, my take on *Tracy* can't be completely Gould's of the 30s; it has to be filtered through me in terms of popular thought and popular culture. Mostly, what's going to make *Tracy* successful is reminding [readers] that Tracy himself is a great character and one we recognize, the good cop, the sheriff. When you can't turn to anybody else, this is the guy who's going to stand tall. People *want* to see that."

Yet in the end, what may attract new fans to the trenchcoated crime stopper might be what has always brought fresh spectators to his endless war on rampaging racketeers: "the extremity of the work.' Notes Len Wein, a dedicated follower of the wrecker of gangland's struggles for most of his life, the strip "is very extreme in its views, in its approach to the characters, who are *fascinating*. They give



All Dick Tracy Art© Copyright 1990 The Walt Disney Company

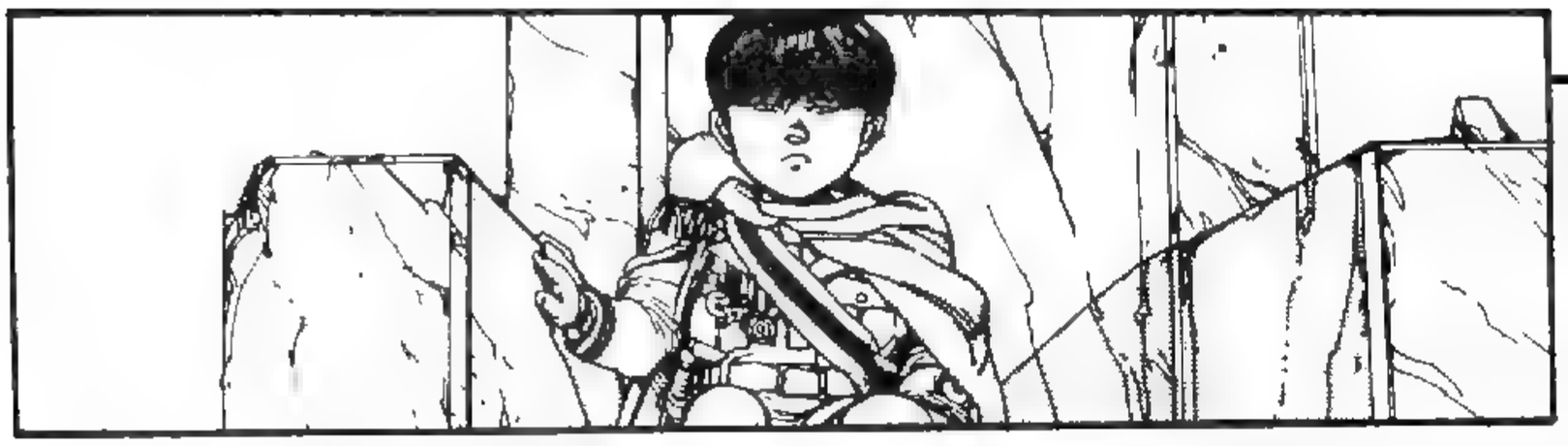
"My biggest influence," Moore confesses, "has to be '30s gangster movies, from *The Roaring Twenties* to *Dead End*."

great deeds.

"I think the perception of many people is that Tracy is a figure of their childhood or of their fathers generation," admits John Moore, currently writing the *Superboy* comic and, with Howard Chaykin, an *Ironwolf* hardcover graphic novel for DC. "People know who Dick Tracy is, but I don't think he's as upfront in their minds as, say, Superman is. He's a character who has been not so much forgotten as simply put aside, mostly from the decline of the adventure strip.

'The movie is certainly the most obvious way" to reach today's audience, he acknowledges. But more importantly, you just really have to tell you the ultimate classic battle of good versus evil, and the good people are as good as they can get, the evil people are as evil as possible, and they never fudge [the line between them].

'Why should there be a *Dick Tracy* comic?" he wonders, stunned that the matter could even be raised. "Why should there be a *Superman* or a *Batman*? Why *shouldn't* there be a *Dick Tracy*? He has been around for 60 years. He's a character who has a history behind him, a position in the American eye, and I think he needs to be put out where he can be seen. As the newspaper [adventure] strip slowly but surely sinks in the west, this is our way of finding avenues to bring these characters to the public. Dick Tracy is America's foremost detective character in comics format, and he *deserves* to be out there."



All Akira Comics Art Katsuhiro Otomo/Epic Comics

Epic's graphic novel series nears the climax of the animated film, but in a very different manner. The *Akira* saga is far from over.

Approaching "Akira"

One of the things I love about the comic-book version of *Akira*," says its American interpreter, Jo Duffy, "is that, in addition to the great action sequences that are somewhere in between *Lethal Weapon* and a Chuck Jones cartoon, it also has beautiful, slow-moving, emotional and moody scenes: moments of great emotional subtlety and power. That's some of what had to go in the movie."

Duffy receives a literal translation of the Japanese *Akira* from the publisher, Kodansha Ltd., and then her work begins—making sure that the translation is more than just a direct one, that it should in fact be readable in colloquial English to an American audience. "Since starting the series, I have become acquainted with the translator. She's very aware of and sensitive to the fact that there are differences in cultural nuance between America and Japan. She's very good about letting me know when something is a uniquely Japanese sentiment that simply *won't* translate," Duffy explains.

"One part of my job that I don't think a translator could do is speech patterns. Even when the English we get back is absolutely flawless, it doesn't always take into account the subtlety of who is going to be a formal character, who's well-educated, who is not. That's one of the most important things I do, seeing that all the characters speak in distinctive voices."

Duffy says the differences between the comic-book and film versions of *Akira* are really few, that it's more a matter of film style versus comic style. There is, however, a major plot discrepancy: "Anybody who has read the comic will be very shocked when they discover the whereabouts of Akira in the movie. The movie has taken a different solution to the problem of controlling his power. People who read the comic first are surprised by the movie's version, and people who saw the movie first are surprised by the comic."

The stylistic differences are mainly ones of length and complexity. "Very often, the film has to get to the point emotionally much more quickly with characters like, for example, Lady Miyako," she remarks. "In the comic, Otomo takes his time and plays her for a lot of mood. That's something that would probably require a 50-hour film to do justice to."

Still, Duffy admits, the film is remarkable. "It would be very hard not to fall in love with the movie version of *Akira*," she says. "It is so exciting and the finest animation I can recall seeing in decades."

At presstime, Duffy is working on the 20th issue of the American version of *Akira*, and she says the maxi-series may turn out to last somewhat longer than anticipated. "Otomo is *still* working on the series in Japan," she notes. "We're very close to the end of the last of the collected volumes right now and I've already begun working with people at Kodansha on the newer material." Duffy reports that Epic's editors may begin receiving the Japanese version of the series before it is collected in album format there, meaning American *Akira* fans will no longer be so far behind Japanese readers.

Breaking all this material down into 64-page American chunks has, fortunately, not been a big problem for Duffy. "We have a real advantage on this project, in that there are many high points where the music can swell, as it were. There are high points of physical drama—a cliffhanger with someone's life in danger—and moments of truth as well."

Duffy is an accomplished comic-book writer in her own right, with credits on such series as *Power Man and Iron Fist* and *Star Wars*. Other writers might feel that this kind of translation/interpretation work is lacking in creativity, that they are not contributing anything to the process. Duffy disagrees.

"I'm a big fan of Otomo's work and I don't lose sight for a minute of the fact that this is *his* story and these are his characters," she notes. "But I've seen American adaptations of some of my favorite *manga* that I found unreadable. If I didn't feel I was contributing to making this book more fun for Americans to read and that I was bringing skills to it that many other American comics writers lack, I would be happier not doing it.

"I love doing the book, because every time I'm presented with a linguistic problem that I like my solution to, and I think the readers will never realize existed," Jo Duffy comments, "I'm pleased with myself and it makes working on the book tremendous fun."

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill

Gang leader Kaneda makes his last stand.

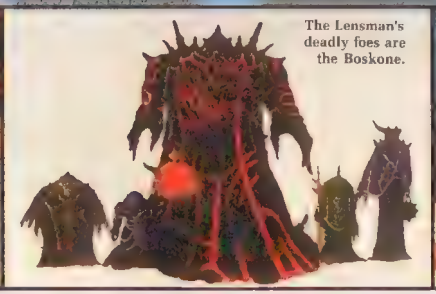
Animated Invasions

From across the Pacific come mutant punks and cosmic terrors to conquer American screens.

By BOB MILLER

Going with the [illegible] Dog [illegible] Nausicaa [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Set against the back[illegible] Neo-Tokyo, Kaneda rumbles [illegible] rival motorcycle gang, the C[illegible]



The Lensman's deadly foes are the Boskone.

[illegible] military experiment in gene manipulation.

Saturday morning animation."

Meanwhile, Harmony Gold U.S.A. had been importing Japanese animation to American television. Under the direction of Carl Macek, three Japanese series—*Super Dimension Fortress Macross*, *Super Dimension Calvary Southern Cross* and *Genesis Climber Mospeada*—were combined into an 85-episode epic called *Robotech*. *Space Pirate Captain Harlock* was merged with *The Queen of a Thousand Years*. Footage from *Southern Cross* and *Megazone 23* mixed with new animation for *Robotech—The Movie*.

The 1987 Los Angeles International Animation Celebration premiered *Robotech—The Movie* as well as the Hayao Miyazaki classic, *Laputa: The Castle in the Sky*. Both Japanese films, in addition to the *Computer Animation Show*, were the only movies to sell out in advance.

"When *Robotech—The Movie* was playing to its 2000-seat capacity audience," Beck relates, "Carl Macek and I were standing in the back and I was thinking, 'My God, look at that on the big screen; it looks great. And the audience *loves* it. I *know* there's an adult audience for these films.' So I said to Carl, 'There's a business in this. If you can get me some films, I can put them in the theaters.'

Macek agreed to team up with Beck because "my experience with Harmony Gold indicated to me that companies like Harmony Gold that *had* the money were not really interested in putting out the material as it existed originally, but merely trying to purchase product and sell it as though it were anything. It could be shoes; it could be desks, whatever.'

All Akira & Lensman Movie Art: Courtesy Streamline Pictures

Lensman Kimball Kinnison and Galactic Patrol nurse Clarrissa "Chris" MacDougall evade their enemies.

So, Macek pooled his connections with the Japanese animation studios with Beck's experience in film distribution, to form Streamline Pictures.

"It took about six months organizing our contacts, making arrangements with various companies that had the rights to certain feature-length films," says Macek, "and over the course of the last eight months we've been able to procure the rights to *Laputa*, a semi-animated film called *Twilight of the Cockroaches*, *Lensman* and most recently *Akira*."

Streamline Pictures play in the small art theaters and in independent cinemas, not in any of the larger circuits. Films are released on a city-by-city basis.

. The reason for limited engagements, according to Jerry Beck, is because "the audience for these films is not that huge because it's still an unknown factor in this country. We have to make a small wave first. And that's really the right way to go. If we *had* the money to open the film up in 1000 theaters on one date and have a massive ad campaign and tell everybody that this movie is starting on a particular Friday in July, it wouldn't work. It would be losing lots of money. This is a very safe, smart method of actually trying to make money and do this large task of getting people into Japanese animation."

Dolby-stereo prints of *Akira* began playing to select theaters during the Christmas season. *Lensman* is scheduled for release in April.

Lensman was made by the Japanese as a theatrical feature *and* as a TV series. Produced by Kodansha Studios, *SF New Era: The Lensman* was a 104-minute feature released in Japan by Toho/Towa in 1984. The movie was a breakthrough in its blend of cel animation and the most sophisticated computer graphics since *TRON*. It received a standing ovation when a subtitled version premiered at the 1984 LA WorldCon.

Ignoring events in the movie the TV series established its own continuity with the characters. *Galactic Patrol: The Lensman* lasted 25 episodes, broadcast weekly from October 6, 1984 to March 30, 1985. A comic strip tie-in by Mitsuru Miura ran in the weekly *Shonen*.

The Japanese versions were based on characters introduced in *Galactic Patrol*, a six-part serial novel first published in *Astounding Science-Fiction* in 1937. The author, E.E. (Edward Elmer) "Doc' Smith, had envisioned an interplanetary police force (antecedents of the Green Lantern Corps and the Jedi Knights) called the Lensmen—incorruptible humans and aliens endowed with Lenses which give them telepathic powers—enforcing peace and justice throughout two galaxies. A series of novels, currently available in paperback from Berkley Books, followed. (For more on "Doc" Smith, see STARLOG #139).

However, the Japanese versions of *Lensman* were *not* adaptations of Smith's stories; rather, they were restructured adventures using Smith's characters. Even some characters were redesigned. For example, in the books, the evil Boskone were space pirates comprised of many species; in the Japanese version, they're *all* crustacean-like creatures.

The movie, written by Soji Yoshikawa, focuses on Kimball Kinnison, a young Lensman entrusted with delivering secrets stolen from the Boskone to the Galactic Patrol. Kim is aided by a Lensman "dragon" named Worsel, the immensely strong Peter Van Buskirk and Clarrissa "Chris" MacDougall, a resourceful Galactic Patrol nurse. Our heroes must elude the Boskone fleet, survive deadly traps on the jungle planet Delgon, and free a mining colony on Radelix before the story climaxes in a spectacular space battle at the Boskone's home world.

"What's nice about *Lensman* is basically it's the first time that you see strong raster graphics, computer-generated 3-D imagery combined with traditional 3-D animation," Carl Macek says. "The computer animation was composed by the Japan Computer Graphics Lab under the New York Institute of Technology, and it was ground-breaking at the time. It's like *TRON* meets *Robotech*. And there's about a solid 20 minutes worth of hard-edged, beautiful computer raster graphics."

Harmony Gold has acquired the American rights to the *Lensman* TV series, compiling six episodes into a TV movie, *Lensman: The Power of the Lens*. Release plans are indefinite.

Says Jerry Beck, "The whole success of Japanese animation in this

(continued on page 52)

Living With "Lensman"

For Kimball Kinnison, the adventure of a lifetime literally dropped out of the sky.

Investigating a spaceship that crashed on his farm, Kinnison finds a dying agent of the Galactic Patrol in the wreckage. One of the legendary Lensmen, the injured man entrusts the youth with his two possessions: weapons data vital to the Galactic Patrol, stolen from the vicious Boskone, and his Lens, a mystical device that bestows tremendous power on the wielder.

Kinnison accepts both and quickly discovers that doing so has made him responsible for the very survival of the Galactic Patrol—and all the peaceful races of the universe.

Eternity Comics' new series, *Lensman*, is written by Paul O'Connor (CS #9), with art by Tim Eldred and Paul Young. The title adapts the Japanese animated feature movie and subsequent TV program, both of which are based on the classic SF novels by E.E. "Doc" Smith.

"It's an adaptation twice removed," says Eldred, the book's penciller. "The Japanese animation bore very little resemblance to the original stories, and it's the Japanese version to which Eternity purchased the rights."

Because of the difference between the original stories and the animation, Eldred admits that trying to adapt the animation while maintaining the flavor of Smith's tales has proven itself to be a difficult task.

"What we're trying to do is find a middle ground," he notes. "We're making an attempt to knock it back into shape while simultaneously not pulling anything from the stories, so it's an interesting tightrope to walk."

One bit Eldred says had to be changed was a scene where the Lens of the dying pilot jumps onto Kinnison's hand. "The challenge was trying to find an artistic alternative," Eldred says. "In the novels, the Lens is a mystical badge for Galactic Patrol agents and each is specially crafted [to be unique and symbiotic with that agent]. What we're going to do is change it so we can match the visuals of the animation while staying true to Smith's original concepts."

True to the stories, Kinnison will find himself facing incredible danger, armed with little more than his courage, a handful of allies and the awesome powers of the Lens.

"Actually, [accepting the Lens and] the data makes him a target," Eldred says, noting that the first six issues of the book, which adapt the movie, will depict Kinnison's struggle to get his data to the Galactic Patrol.

Kinnison will be aided by a small group of Patrol agents, including lovely Clarissa MacDougal, the huge alien "Buzz" Buskirk, the dragonlike alien Worzel, and Wild Bill, a spy operating out of an enemy disco.

His foes are the Boskone, a race of militaristic crustaceans who are fundamentally incompatible with humans. "They'll be the major villains [for the forseeable future]," Eldred says. "They were the most fun to draw; they're not at all racially uniform and their commanders are all different. I haven't drawn anything like them before."

Just as the aliens will be more diverse, Eldred says the storyline will grow more complex and more fully developed than the animation.

"The story in [the movie and TV series] is very simplistic," he says. "We're going to treat it as a skeleton and flesh it out some more."

The Eternity series will combine both the continuity from the feature *Lensman* and the TV series to form one cohesive history for the Galactic Patrol.

In addition to doing *Lensman*, Eldred has a book of his own in the works for Eternity, a 12-issue mini-series called *Broid*, which he describes as hardcore science-fiction adventure with Japanese and American influences. *Broid* begins publication in May.

Once *Lensman* is under way, Eldred says there will be a four-issue mini-series called *Galactic Patrol*, which will give the readers additional background on the *Lensman* universe. The story will run concurrently with the adaptation of the movie, and its conclusion will tie in with the sixth issue of *Lensman*.

At this point, Tim Eldred sees no limit to how far *Lensman* can go. "There's a lot to draw on," the artist says. "The Lensman saga is *the* quintessential space opera."

—Drew Bittner

All Lensman Art: Copyright 1989 Edward E. Smith, Phd. & M.K. Co. Ltd./Licensed by Harmony Gold U.S.A.

LETTERING

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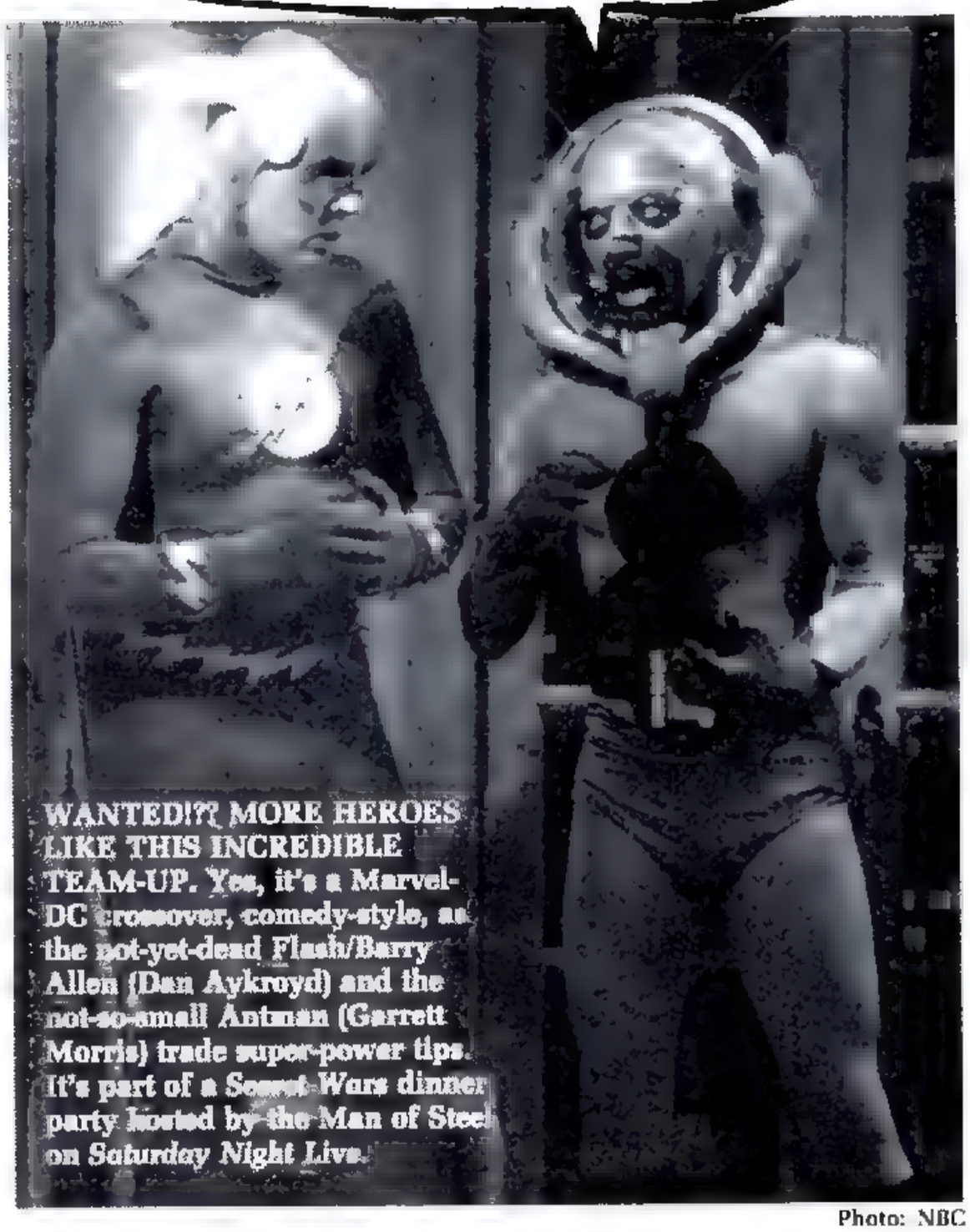

WANTED!?! MORE HEROES LIKE THIS INCREDIBLE TEAM-UP. Yes, it's a Marvel-DC crossover, comedy-style, as the not-yet-dead Flash/Barry Allen (Dan Aykroyd) and the not-so-small Antman (Garrett Morris) trade super-power tips. It's part of a Secret Wars dinner party hosted by the Man of Steel on Saturday Night Live.
Photo: NBC

...At last, someone connected with the *Batman* TV show who realizes that their version was the bad one. Though I admire Yvonne Craig's statement, I have to admit the introduction of Batgirl, in both the comics and the series, didn't exactly do anything for me. On the show, she tended to blend into the background, and has suffered from bad writing and mediocre art in the comics. They had just started to make Batgirl interesting around *Detective Comics* #527. But what happens just as she becomes interesting? She gets shot by the Joker and put in a wheelchair.

If they should get around to having Batgirl in the movies, the perfect choice would be Tonya Knight, a champion women's bodybuilder. The ideal Robin would be gymnast Kurt Thomas. It would give him the opportunity to make us forgive and forget *Gymkata*.

TV *Batman's* line producer Howie Horwitz's feeling that Honey West and Emma Peel were "lacking in femininity"? Baloney! Honey and Emma had sexiness because they didn't have to kowtow to their male counterparts. Not to mention that Honey looked hot in black and Emma had a great pair of legs.

Thank goodness Arnold Schwarzenegger *isn't* going to be *Sgt. Rock*. This is the opposite of the Michael Keaton controversy: Schwarzenegger is much too big for the Rock, not to mention the accent. While I really like Bruce Willis, I can't picture him as Rock either. The perfect 'Sarge' would be Ted (*Cheers*) Danson: Tall, gaunt, looking somewhat battle-worn. Another thing, I hope the producers don't turn this into a World War II version of *Rambo*. Pee-wee Herman being considered for *Plastic Man*? While Plas' world is somewhat zany and off-key, I hope that Herman isn't picked. When I hear Plastic Man's real name, Eel" O'Brien, I think of someone tall and lanky, like Ed Begley, Jr. Actually, I could see Pee wee as the Toyman vs. Superman or Superboy.

One final thing, to Warner Bros.: Picture this: a 20" x 14" poster. On the left is the Superman "S" with the name "REEVE" underneath it. On the right, the Batman symbol with the name "KEATON" beneath it. Below that, in the center, the title: *The World's Finest Movie*. Think about it.

Willie Holmes
8453 S. Saginaw Avenue
Chicago, IL 60617

...I enjoyed your Batgirl piece in issue #10. Strangely enough, I had just had an article on TV's Batgirl published shortly before I saw this issue in *Movie's Collector's World* which I called, "Batgirl on TV: The Dominioned Dim-Wit."

I believe the producers made a big mistake in not allowing the Batgirl of TV to have the same judo and karate skills of the comics' Batgirl. People loved the comic book Batgirl when she first appeared in *Detective* #359 in 1966, partly, because here was a woman who could take care of herself when battling criminals. In the series, however, Batgirl *never* captured any crooks on her own and it seemed week after week, she was saved by Batman or Robin. Remember the episode, Louie's Lethal Lilac Time featuring Milton Berle? In this show, Bruce and Dick are held hostage and Barbara Gordon says to Alfred, 'It's going to be difficult without Batman or Robin, but maybe Batgirl alone can do something." She does she's captured and the Dynamic Duo have to come to *her* aid!

How could any little girl admire a woman who always needed saving? Even Kathy Kane, the original Batwoman of the Batman comics from the late 1950s to early 1960s, captured crooks on her own. I believe if Batgirl was given the chance to pull some judo now and then, she may have added some spark to the series.

On another note, I'm glad that Craig was upset with the way Barbara Gordon's crime-busting career was ended in the comics. There was no need of this happening as Barbara retired in the *Batgirl Special*. Of course, Barbara could stand one day, *if* DC Comics chooses to revive her. Someday, I hope that will happen.

Fred Grandinetti
Watertown, MA

Barbara Gordon has taken on the new identity of the Oracle and fights crime from her wheelchair in the pages of the Suicide Squad.

...A Vampirella movie!?!?! Great!! I hope it gets done. Barbara Eden does have the right look to play the role but I really can't see her playing a deadly femme fatale. I can't see her doing it when it was first proposed [in the '70s] and I can't see her doing it now. I disagree with Creative Director Bill Mohalley. I think that this could be the perfect time for a magazine/comic about Vampirella. Horror comics have made a comeback and if handled properly, a new *Vampirella* just might work.

I am a fan of the *Hellraiser* movies but wasn't really interested in the comic. Comic versions and movies and TV programs don't always do as well as said show. That is, I wasn't interested until I read Michael McAvennie's article. The only thing that I don't think I would like about the comic series is the idea that it is obsession with any puzzle—or is it just obsession, period?—that can open the door to Hell. If I recall the movies correctly, it took the blonde girl solving the puzzle box to re-open the gate to Hell. If it 'only' took obsession with puzzles to do it, then it would have opened for her

long before the events of the first movie happened. But this isn't really a problem, some changes are expected when anything goes from one medium to another.

I've always enjoyed reading about Batgirl in comics and watching her on the series. I have also always liked her more than any other member of the Bat-family. I found Kyle Counts' interview with Yvonne Batgirl" Craig a real treat. I was very glad to learn that she doesn't seem to harbor any bad feelings for her time spent as Batgirl. Sometimes when an actor has only one role that makes him/her memorable, they tend to try and forget it or blame it for their careers not being more successful, while others cling to that role in the hopes that they won't be forgotten. I'm very glad to find out that she takes her time spent as Batgirl as what it should be taken as, an interesting experience.

Derrick Fannin
HCR 70 Box 365
Van Lear, KY 41265

...I just bought COMICS SCENE #10. I love the article on the new *Hellraiser* comic. I haven't seen any of the movies, but the article makes me want to. It really seems to be a truly awesome comic. Exactly what is a "Cenobite"? Does the *Nightbreed* comic, also mentioned in the article, have anything to do with it?

Nathaniel Levy
573 Grand Street
New York, NY 10002

Nightbreed *is a separate comic based on Clive Barker's* Cabal *novel (as is the film now in release) And Cenobites are greedy, twisted and evil individuals whom the puzzle box has turned into loathsome creatures, who take care of Hell among other things. Sort of like accountants. Or lawyers (Hey, hey, just kidding, you Cenobites you).*

...Recently, your magazine [COMICS SCENE #10] featured a sizeable article on the animated TV series *Beetlejuice*. As director, I was asked to do the interview but, regretfully, I declined. The request for this interview came at the most critical, labor intensive period of the production cycle and I literally could not afford the time.

It's surprising that no mention of the many talented Canadian artists responsible for the strong visual impact was made. Surely, COMICS SCENE, as reviewers of storytelling art, realize that writers and artists work *together* to achieve a successful project. The artists here at Nelvana really took the *Beetlejuice* concept and made it alive, weird and very funny. Great and gutsy art direction, wild design, strong storyboarding and a lot of focused energy has made this series fly. Layout artists, editors, musicians, animators, sound effects editors et al, all put their hearts into this project.

The point is that *Beetlejuice* shines because of great teamwork. *Everyone* has given their all on this project.

Robin Budd, Director
Beetlejuice Animated Series
Nelvana
32 Atlantic Avenue
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M6K 1XB

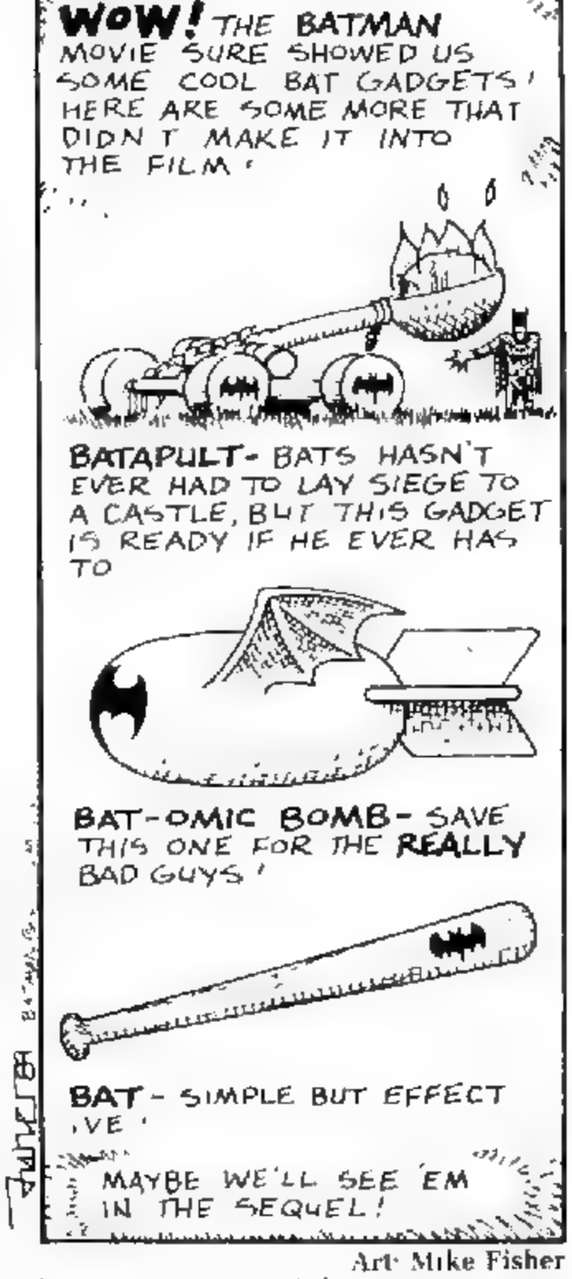
...Thanks for your article on our beastly Saturday morning TV show, *Beetlejuice*. We hope it gave your readers some insight as to how a television show gets beheaded—in the right direction. We felt, however, something was left undead—er, unsaid.

It's important to acknowledge the talents of producer Spooky" Steve Hodgins, director Robin "The Haunted Budd and the exceptional animation production staff at Nelvana. They have created a totally unique look for Saturday morning and are doing an outstanding job meeting a tough production schedule. The whole team is caught up in the "spirit" of weirdness in *Beetlejuice*. Nelvana has not only delivered superb storyboards and first rate recordings, they've added all kinds of special, creative touches to our stories. Therefore, we would be remiss if we didn't ask you to give them the credit they deserve.

Beetlejuice is a real showcase for what Nelvana can do. Watch the show and you'll see that they have proven themselves superior to standard Saturday morning animation. We feel Nelvana is the animation studio of the future—both for us and for an industry that can use a fresh, enthusiastic approach. When they got hold of *Beetlejuice*, the Nelvana gang wrung their hands and chortled, It's showtime!

Patsy Cameron &
Tedd Anasti
Story Editors, Nelvana
Entertainment

COMICS SCENE is happy to credit the artists and animators behind Beetlejuice. *When COMICS SCENE contacted Nelvana in July, we asked to do interviews with whomever might be available from* Beetlejuice—*"key animators, storyboard artists, story editors, animation directors, producers." The Nelvana spokesperson was surprised by our request, noting that* no one *(i.e. no other magazine, newspaper, TV series or other media) had contacted the company about doing an article on* Beetlejuice. *COMICS SCENE was the first—and perhaps only magazine to do a story. (At presstime, in December, we have not yet seen a* Beetlejuice *article published* anywhere else.*) Time was also short in our own production cycle. Our request for interviewees was answered with only three names—one of whom we were subsequently told was "too busy to do interviews."*


WOW! THE BATMAN MOVIE SURE SHOWED US SOME COOL BAT GADGETS! HERE ARE SOME MORE THAT DIDN'T MAKE IT INTO THE FILM!
BATAPULT- BATS HASN'T EVER HAD TO LAY SIEGE TO A CASTLE, BUT THIS GADGET IS READY IF HE EVER HAS TO
BAT-OMIC BOMB- SAVE THIS ONE FOR THE REALLY BAD GUYS!
BAT- SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE!
MAYBE WE'LL SEE 'EM IN THE SEQUEL!
Art: Mike Fisher

...The new *Batman* book, *Gotham by Gaslight* seems to be DC's answer to Marvel's *What If?* series. Too bad DC created the *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. It would be great if someone did do a story about what would happen if Superman landed in Russia or Canada, etc...Or how about Batman meets Frankenstein?

With Captain America's 50th Anniversary coming up in 1990, how about an interview with the people in the film like director Albert Pyun, Matt Salinger, Scott Paulin? And Jack Kirby and Joe Simon? And an article on Cap's 1943 serial and the two Cap TV films with Reb Brown.

What are Marvel's plans for Cap in 1990? Will Cap play a major role in the next crossover saga? A series like *The Saga of Sub-Mariner* on the hero's 50th Anniversary in 1990 1991?

Peter Garcia
Hattillo, Puerto Rico

The red, white & blue celebration begins on page 36 and will continue

...Perfect fittings? Yeah, on imperfect bodies. I looked at the picture of Matt Salinger as Captain America and Scott Paulin as the Red Skull. what I want to know is, is the title of this movie *Captain America. The Parody*?

First off, the Red Skull looks like one of those cheap masks you can buy from the back of an SF magazine. And the key word is "skull." Skulls do not have noses—especially big red ones.

But what I'm more concerned with is Cap. Here's another situation where an actor chosen to portray a (superhero) role doesn't have the build. And unfortunately this costume does not have built-in muscles. Hopefully with the right lighting, Matt Salinger/Cap's ears won't look so big.

Nevertheless, all of the U.S.A. will be seeing a skinny Captain America, and another Marvel myth bites the dust. Somebody should tell Stan Lee if another actor isn't built big, no one is going to believe that he has super strength. You wanna see a skinny Hulk or a thin Thor? No! Well, why should it be any different for Captain America? Somebody please tell me!

David Denison
Milwaukee, WI

Actually, those aren't *Salinger's ears. The ears are part of the costume. Really. Honest. It's the latest in hero head gear.*

...As far as COMIC SCENE's ideas for the role of the Penguin are concerned, I can see Bob Hoskins easily playing the Penguin. I can see Donald Pleasence, Patrick Macnee and *maybe* Rick Moranis playing the Penguin. But John Lithgow? John Cleese? John Candy? Michael Caine? No. I can't see that. As for Burgess Meredith, he's much too old for the role now.

The only idea I cannot stress enough is my vote for the Riddler to be played by Michael Biehn!

Tony Fuentes
P.O. Box 920585
La Jolla, CA 92037

The whole idea's academic since the Penguin will apparently now not *be in* Batman II.

Japanimation

(continued from page 48)

country is going to be based on the voice acting that's done in English. In the past, they have been done fast, quick, cheap, but with no real thought on the script and the acting quality involved. The dubbing of *Laputa* was done that way. We did not dub *Akira*. That was done by the Japanese, but they did a good job."

Although the original film version of *Lensman* was dubbed by Harmony Gold and given the sub-title *The Secret of the Lens*, Streamline has since acquired the American distribution rights to the feature. States Macek, "We are going to go back and get the original soundtrack and music and effects track and remix the dialogue to the original Japanese soundtrack because I feel that *that's* the way that film should be seen, in the original soundtrack."

In selecting the films they distribute, the criteria is whether the film can provide "an experience in the theater," according to Beck. "We're not going to release a film that looks bad, or it doesn't make any difference if you see it on home video. And there are so many to choose from, that have been made in Japan for all these years. We're taking our pick.

"We can't immediately come out with *Appleseed* or one of the *Dirty Pair* films or some fan favorites because possibly some are limited animation and they're not up to the quality of the artwork in a *Laputa* or an *Akira*. Or maybe the fan favorite is such an esoteric thing that *only* the fans would appreciate it and maybe a general audience won't. So, we pick the films that we feel will work with the fans *and* with a general audience.

The best Japanese animation can be *very* accessible to a general audience," says Jerry Beck. "You can come into *Akira* or *Laputa* or *Lensman* or even *Twilight of the Cockroaches* and you don't have to know one thing about animation, Japanese animation or anything except it's a *movie* you're about to see. And that's what we have to aim for."

Explaining the appeal of Japanese animation, Carl Macek remarks, "Traditionally animated film may be a spectacular example of animation, but oftentimes may have limited entertainment value. Japanese animation is about dynamic action, for the most part. And although there is evidence of superb animation in Japanese-animated films, you don't watch them to learn how to animate, or understand what animation is all about. You watch them to be *entertained. That's* the criteria." CS

Cap

(continued from page 40)

hooked to a crane and a series of hydraulics that had to fly it straight up for about 100 feet. 'That was easily the most complicated effect in the film,' says Frazee.

Still, the special FX man claims *Captain America* could have benefitted from double the budget and double the shooting schedule. "But for what we were given, I think things came out pretty well."

As for Kim Gillingham, her feature film debut would have been tough enough if she was playing only one character. But Gillingham, whose previous credits include a lot of theater and some TV guest shots, had the challenge of having to play Steve's girl friend Bernice as she was during the war, a more modern and much more mature Bernice *and* Bernice's 24-year-old daughter Sharon.

"All through the film, I was thinking to myself, '67, 24, 21,' " chuckles the actress. "Mentally, I was really running back and forth. For a first film, this was really a stretch for me, but it was worth it. I felt this was something meaty for me to grab onto.

'I was faced with having to play two women who, because they come from the '40s and the '80s, are basically the antithesis of each other. Bernice is idealistic and optimistic while Sharon is an '80s woman full of independence and cynicism. Playing two women who were trying to work out their inner struggles was a plus for me in this picture."

Gillingham knew nothing about *Captain America* but did her homework by reading the comics and, in a most literal sense, going home again.

"My parents grew up reading the comic books and it was by talking to them that I realized how popular a character Captain America was. I guess that bodes pretty well for the film."

Albert Pyun didn't have to ask his parents who the star-spangled avenger was, though. The Hawaiian-born director devoured Captain America comics while growing up. He also gave his best shots to substandard Cannon products in hopes of something better coming his way. When the payback turned out to be *Captain America*, Pyun was thrilled.

But once the thrill was gone, Pyun knew the project was dangerous.

"The script had such a strong point-of-view and such strong central themes that I knew there was a danger in satisfying both the hardcore Captain America fans and yet getting around the [non-comics audience's] expectations of a comic-book hero and getting them deeply into the story. Captain America is not a hero who takes lives; he *saves* them. He's not trying to save the entire world; he's just trying to save a little bit of it. I was real worried that the humanity of the character and the story might not come through."

He stops short of calling his film a *literal* translation of the comic. "But I think it's incredibly *faithful* to the comic book," says Pyun. "It transcends the comic-book-to-film genre in that it's about something that's meaningful. When was the last time you saw a comic-book movie that was about something?"

Pyun concedes that the then-impending success of *Batman* gave the extra "push" to get *Captain America* into production, but he warns that those going into theaters expecting a Bat clone will be disappointed.

"The only parallel between the two characters is that they both wear costumes and fight crime. Steve Rogers was an invalid, a loner, a man who is sensitive to life around him. That alone makes him different from Batman. Bruce Wayne is driven by internal forces. Steve Rogers is driven by wanting to give something back to a country that has given something to him."

Pyun's memories of shooting in Yugoslavia are more emotional than anecdotal. He remembers the rocket launch scene as being "*real* scary."

"We worked long hours and using local crews occasionally caused some language problems. We also had to be pretty careful around some of the old buildings in the city where we shot. It's not like we could put bullet hits in the side of a thousand-year-old building and not worry about damaging it.

"There were *no* compromises involved. We didn't shoot scenes we weren't happy with. But the biggest surprise for me was the quality of the performances of the actors. This is a comic-book movie and many people would not necessarily put much effort into something like this because they wouldn't take it seriously. But I was very serious about this and so was the cast," says the director.

Captain America, at presstime, is scheduled for April release. Pyun, who claims he will not direct a sequel, feels the success or failure of *Captain America* hinges on one thing.

'This may be a comic-book movie, but at its core is a deeply moving story about one person taking some responsibility for the world he lives in," Albert Pyun says. "If the audience finds itself crying throughout the movie, then I'll know we've got a success on our hands." CS

The Hulk definitely dies," announces actor Lou Ferrigno, responding to the obvious question raised by *The Death of the Incredible Hulk* (to air this spring on NBC). "There's no question about it. The big green guy gets it in the end."

By all indications, Banner, who has endured a gamma radiation-induced affliction for the past 12 years on television (much longer in the comics), *also* dies, seemingly closing the book on his tormented life forever, at least on television.

Ferrigno, who popularized the Marvel Comics-based character during *The Incredible Hulk*'s original 1977-1982 television run, reunites with co-star Bill Bixby for the third TV movie based on the successful series. Writer Gerald DiPego and producer Hugh Spencer-Phillips (*The Trial of the Incredible Hulk*) return, as Bixby takes on triple duty as actor, executive producer and director.

"Bill has been giving it everything he's got," says Ferrigno of Bixby's commitment to the project. "He

Hulk Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1990 Marvel Entertainment Group

DEATH OF THE INCREDIBLE HULK

By [illegible]

A TV movie comes not to praise the jade giant, but to bury him.

...and apparently, so does the little pink guy (Bill Bixby).

From out of the shadows steps the man actually responsible for *The Death of the Incredible Hulk*—Banner's other alter-ego, Bill Bixby.

knows the material so well, which makes it a great experience. We're getting back to the roots of the Hulk, closer to the original ideas with more action like the comics."

The latest *Hulk* installment finds Dr. David Banner sweeping floors in a government research facility where noted scientist Dr. Ronald Pratt (Phillip Sterling) experiments with genetic healing and gamma radiation. Desperate to rid himself of his big green problem, Banner secretly gains access to the lab and goes to work, but Pratt, an insightful and perceptive man, recognizes Banner's malady and offers to help cure him.

Meanwhile, a quasi-terrorist organization bent on acquiring the secrets of genetic manipulation, sends a spy into the research lab during a controlled Hulk-out experiment. The beautiful Jasmin (played by former Miss America Elizabeth Gracen) wreaks havoc on the proceedings, jeopardizes Pratt's experiment and witnesses Banner's transformation.

Soon after, Dr. Pratt and his wife are kidnapped by the bad guys and Banner finds himself on the lam. He stops long enough to form an unlikely relationship with Jasmin before returning with her to rescue his would-be saviors. Banner Hulks-out, saves the Pratts, but in doing so apparently meets an untimely death.

Probably the last time, Hulk (Lou Ferrigno) smiles.

It's an emotional ending, comments Ferrigno, but from an actor's perspective I think it's some of the best work we've done. You get to see another side of the creature seldom dealt with in the past. He's intelligent, sympathetic and vulnerable.

The man who helps expose this [illegible] side of the not-so-jolly green giant is Dr. Ronald Pratt. Like his character, actor Phillip Sterling (known to comics fans as Dr. Frank Kent, recalls Sterling. That is a fabulous device, but it doesn't have the element of reality that the Hulk does. The Hulk tries for something more and appeals to me more.

There has been a very real, stylistically speaking, human story to the Hulk, in addition to the genre aspects we all love. David Banner has always been a relatively tortured person, yet you get a feeling of sanity with him. He's not a wild adventure character and yet he fulfills all those things, too. It's a really remarkable combination.

Producer Hugh Spencer-Phillips is quick to agree with Sterling's assessment of *The Incredible Hulk*. However he feels that any comparisons made to the Marvel Comics character, at this stage, should be rectified.

"We obviously have to keep the integrity of the comics character intact," explains Spencer-Phillips. "If we took the script too far away from that character, Marvel and Stan Lee would have the right to veto it. However, we're creating other stories, trying to get back to the essence of the TV series. We've gotten away from that in the past two films.

The Incredible Hulk Returns (CS#3) and *The Trial of the Incredible Hulk* served as pilots for Marvel Comics characters spin-offs. Although they drew good ratings, proposed series for Thor and Daredevil didn't fly.

"I don't think the network knew where to put *Daredevil* in the schedule," says Spencer-Phillips. "We were [illegible] for NBC and they, being the top-rated network, didn't need it — they had stronger stuff to put in. The Daredevil character is quite complex and there's a lot of pow and bang violent action, so it doesn't really fit an early slot for the kids nor does it fit a late slot for adults, so where do you put it? Unfortunately, that one fell through the cracks as far as what audience they were targeting."

New World Television had planned to introduce and spin-off Marvel characters like Iron Man and She-Hulk, but, reports the producer, they lacked a good, strong script to go with in those cases.

"They all [illegible] to be a *pure* Hulk, and in many respects, it's good because we have a very strong storyline and it gives us a chance to see another side of David Banner.

"Is this really the final chapter in the life of David Banner? Pressed for a [illegible] he responds, 'No comment.'"

All Hulk Photos: © Universal City Studios, Inc. - NBC

Boop-Oop-A-Doop

Even after 60 years, Betty Boop still just wants to be loved by you, you and nobody else but you.

By KYLE COUNTS

She turns 60 this month, but to look at her, you would swear she had discovered her own private fountain of youth. Liz Taylor? Nope. Picture instead that cartoon flapper with the cute button nose, the Clara Bow curls and the traffic-stopping gams: Betty Boop. More than a half century after her debut in Max and Dave Fleischer's "Dizzy Dishes" (1930), the all-American sexpot with the bee-stung lips still hasn't lost her boop-oop-a-doop.

Taylor herself would envy the sort of career renaissance that Betty Boop is undergoing these days: a new half-hour prime time animated special titled *Betty Boop's Hollywood Mystery*; a forthcoming book by Brian Sibley, prepared using material from the recently established Fleischer Studio archives; and a 1990 merchandising campaign orchestrated by King Features Syndicate licensing that will see Boop's likeness adorning everything from neon clocks to embroidered jackets. After a period of relative inactivity, business is again booping for everyone's favorite cartoon princess.

Richard Fleischer, son of Max Fleischer—co-creator of Betty Boop with his brother Dave—is clearly delighted with all the attention that his father and uncle are getting as a result of this renewed interest in Betty Boop (see STARLOG #85 for Fleischer's comments on his own career). For

All Betty Boop Art: Copyright 1989 King Features Syndicate, Inc./Fleischer Studios, Inc.

Photo: Copyright 1988 The Walt Disney Company & Amblin Entertainment

Betty Boop returned to the screen alongside Eddie Valiant (Bob Hoskins) in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, but that's not all folks.

Fleischer, director of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, *Fantastic Voyage* and *Conan the Destroyer*, it's an opportunity to recall the many wonderful memories of his youth, a time when the Fleischer household was buzzing with animators and family alike as they discussed cartoons over the dinner table and held jam sessions led by Max on the banjo and ukulele.

"All the people who worked at the studio were like members of the family; they were always over at the house," says Fleischer while in the library of his stately Brentwood, California home. "There would be dinners, parties and musical evenings. Work and play went together.

"I don't remember a time in my life when I wasn't involved with the cartoons. The characters [in the Fleischer cartoons] were my friends from the time I was a small child. When you see your father on the screen [Max and Koko the Clown frequently played off one another in Max and Dave's Out of the Inkwell series] constantly interacting with cartoon characters, it all becomes very real. He and Koko would go out into the city streets and have great adventures. They even traveled to the Moon."

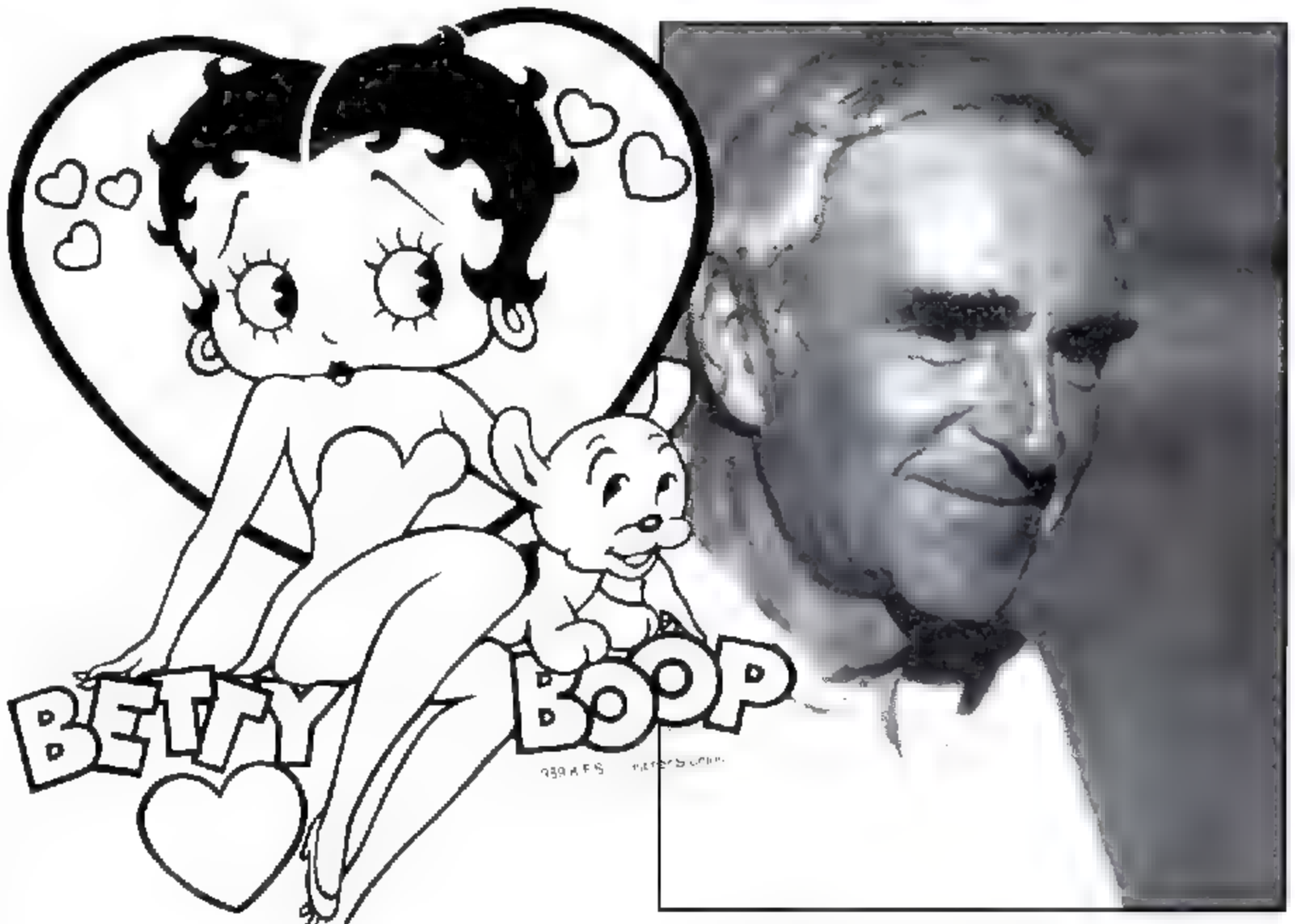
A former engraver, Max Fleischer was working as art editor for *Popular Science Monthly* when he informed his wife, Essie, that he wanted to take a year off and develop a new invention. With Essie's blessing — and the money she had saved up in the family cookie jar — Max revamped a projector salvaged from an unsuccessful open-air theater he opened one rainy summer with another of his brothers (there were five in all). In 1915, the Rotoscope was born. Fleischer's invention was capable of rear projecting a magnified image of one frame of film at a time onto a vertical light board.

Using that invention,which would go on to be embraced by animators as diverse as Walt Disney and Ralph Bakshi, Max and Dave Fleischer developed their first 100 feet of animated film in the six-room apartment in Brooklyn where Max and Essie lived.

Once that first 100 feet was complete — the Rotoscope enabled Max to trace live-action footage frame by frame to achieve lifelike motion — Max reconstructed the Rotoscope so that it would function as a normal projector. He projected the final product, an image of Koko the Clown (Dave served as the live-action model for Koko) cavorting with Max, on a one-foot square piece of cardboard. It was the first time the brothers saw their finished work.

"In the beginning, my father did *all* the animation," recalls Richard Fleischer. "On the first film, he functioned as writer, animator, cameraman and producer, the whole works. But when his operation expanded, he formed an actual production company. Dave then became the director and my father, the producer."

Max showed the 100 feet of film around town, to a chorus of enthusiastic approval. But it was J. R. Bray who took a chance on the Fleischer Brothers and hired them to produce one Out of the Inkwell cartoon a month. The response to Koko and Bimbo (named after the Fleischer family dog) was overwhelming. Unlike the stiff, herky-jerky animation that dominated the pre-Disney era, the Out of the Inkwell cartoons utilized a fluid, "rubber-hose" style of animation that beguiled audiences and critics alike.



"She still has everything going for her today that she had then," says Fleischer.

Many Inkwell cartoons later, the Fleischers developed an "all-talking" cartoon series for Paramount called Talkartoons. Koko went into retirement and Bimbo headlined until the emergence of the next Fleischer Brothers' superstar, Betty Boop, who was unveiled in the sixth Talkarcartoon, "Dizzy Dishes."

Betty's first screen appearance revealed her to be something of a dog — literally. Animator Grim Natwick ("Grim Natwick did not invent Betty Boop," Fleischer points out, "he *animated* her") designed her as a canine-like creature with a black button nose, large jowls and long ears. Natwick credits singer/then-Paramount star Helen Kane with inspiring Betty's look, to which he added, for reasons unknown, the features of a French poodle. (Kane eventually sued Max Fleischer for exploiting what she contended was a "deliberate caricature" of her, but lost her $250,000 suit).

Over the course of the next seven Talkartoons, Betty, who started out as supporting player and quickly moved up to leading lady status, was humanized by Natwick with Dave's input. These changes are evident in her first vehicle of 1932, "Any Rags," where her floppy ears have been turned into earrings and her body has a more feminine look. (By this point, Mae Questel was doing the vocal chores for Betty, and would continue to do so through *Roger Rabbit*. Before Questel, Margie Heinz, Kate Wright, Bonnie Poe and Little Ann Little did Betty's voice at one time or another.) With "Minnie the Moocher" (1932), Betty became an international sex symbol on the order of Mae West.

Why was the world so Boop-struck? "Quite simply, she was a character people fell in love with," explains Fleischer. "She was the typical American flapper who was also the typical American girl. The character had so much going for it: an appealing face, her voice, her singing ability, a tremendous sex appeal that no cartoon character has ever had, before or since. Betty Boop just struck a chord in the American heart. She became ingrained in the pattern of our society."

Fleischer believes that Betty Boop's qualities make her just as appealing to today's audience. "She still has everything going for her today that she had then. She's a unique character, a fiercely independent young woman who's as cute as can be. I think she represents what modern women attribute to themselves. In her time, she was really a liberated woman."

But might today's woman see Betty, who dressed in a revealing manner and was constantly being pursued by characters with raging hormones, as a throwback to the Neanderthal days of male consciousness? "I don't see why," Fleischer replies, "unless women resent other women for whatever their natural attributes are. It's like Michelle Pfeiffer. I think every woman alive should hate Michelle Pfeiffer for being as beautiful and talented as she is. Her sexuality is a big part of her appeal. It's the same for Betty Boop."

However, Fleischer flinches when Betty Boop — he almost always addresses the cartoon star by her full name — is compared to Mae West, as he feels the blonde manhandler's "come up and see me sometime" screen persona was quite different from Betty's. "Betty Boop was *not* aware of her sexuality, as Mae was. Betty was totally innocent. All she knows is that she has to fight off men who are always grabbing her. She's very nice about it, but she does fight them off. Mae West was quite the opposite. She was a seducer, a vamp, always trying to be sexy. Betty never tried to be sexy — she just was. She wasn't a golddigger; she just attracted men, no matter what she did."

Betty's upfront sexuality was an undeniable part of her immense public appeal, a fact that did not go unnoticed by the Hays Office. In the mid-1930s, they put into effect stricter censorship laws that affected cartoons as well as live-action features. Ironically, both Mae and Betty found themselves under attack by moralistic forces determined to clean up films containing suggestive situations and characters. The tougher censorship laws forced the Fleischers to lengthen Betty's skirt, lose the famous garter she wore on her left leg, and cover her cleavage.

"They [the Hays Office] tried to puritanize the character, make her less sexy," Fleischer scowls. "They made her look like a school marm after a while. There was a big outcry from the public about doing all that to their favorite character, and eventually some of her costume was restored, like her garter. But she never really was her old self again."

Remembering the efforts of his father and uncle, Max (pictured) and Dave Fleischer, Richard Fleischer is forging ahead to bring back Betty Boop in style.

Betty Boop Art & Photos: Courtesy Richard Fleischer

Poor Betty Boop was unable to charm the Hays Office censors as they forced more ink onto her costume.

Sailor"]. Betty Boop was fading away."

Indeed, she made only five appearances that year. "Yip, Yip, Yippy," officially released as a Betty Boop cartoon, does not even feature the shapely songbird. Her celluloid swan song, then, comes in "Rhythm on the Reservation', released on July 7, 1939.

Aside from a comic strip and a radio show, all was quiet on the Betty Boop front until 1972 (the year that Max died, at age 89), when new royalties poured into the Fleischer family's coffers thanks to TV and theatrical showings of the studio's cartoon catalog. It was at this time that the Fleischers signed with King Features Syndicate to license firms to merchandise the Betty Boop character, a relationship that continues to this day. Richard and his sister, Ruth (now Ruth Kneitel), were awarded custody of the Betty Boop copyright through inheritance, and it is they who must approve all uses of Betty's image.

In 1981, *Variety* announced that a Betty Boop musical was being prepped for Broadway by Fleischer, but the project, which was financed early on by CBS, never got past the writing stage. Several musical numbers were written by Clark Gesner, who wrote the score for off-Broadway's *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, but Fleischer remains unhappy with both the book and the score. "He [Gesner] just never came through with the material," Fleischer says. "CBS just let it peter out."

On a happier note, Fleischer is currently in pre-production with Toby Bluth, brother of Don (*All Dogs Go to Heaven*) Bluth (CS#11), on a new live-action Betty Boop movie, which he will direct. Fleischer doesn't exactly credit *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* with giving Betty a new lease on life, but he's grateful that her cameo role was realized so faithfully.

"I thought they did a *wonderful* job with her. I just wish she had been in the picture more," smiles Fleischer. "I particularly liked the fact that they kept her in black and white. They animated her perfectly; it was a splendid job. As a matter of fact, I had to approve every frame in that picture that she was in. As they went through pencil tests of the character, they sent me footage for my OK. I was in London, so I stopped in at the studio where the animation was being done. There was even an old-timer there from the Fleischer Studios who came out to say hello."

Fleischer is hesitant to reveal many of the specifics concerning the Betty Boop feature film, which will be set in the 30s. He will say, however, that it will be "different" from *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. "For one thing, Betty will be a live-action character. We'll have to find a girl who has a certain physical similarity to Betty Boop, and who has the right personality: a perky girl who can do the voice."

The film will incorporate animation, but, according to Fleischer, "it will not be as highly animated in the same way. There will be some cartoon characters who will be integrated with the live-action characters, but I don't want to say too much about it yet because it's a very special approach. Koko will definitely be in the film, possibly as a live-action character."

Questel Photo Courtesy Marilyn Dickholtz

During Betty's nine-year reign in the '30s, Mae Questel (and others) provided the "Boop-Oop-A-Doops." Now, Fleischer is looking for someone to fit into Betty's garter for live-action escapes.

The search for the actress to play the titular character is still underway. "There are several people who come to mind almost immediately, one of whom is Bernadette Peters, who does a nightclub act in which she does a Betty Boop tribute. Whether she will be Betty Boop or not, I don't know yet. She's a good example of someone who looks like Betty Boop and can sing. Whether you enhance those things to make her look more like Betty Boop depends on who you're going to use. We will not, however, be using special makeups."

Fleischer served as creative consultant for *Betty Boop's Hollywood Mystery*, which officially commemorates the leggy cartoon star's 60th birthday. He had approval of both the story and the animation, which was handled by Colossal Pictures of San Francisco. The musical adventure concerns a stolen gem that Betty (voice by newcomer Melissa Fahn), working as an amateur detective with her pals Koko and Bimbo, is trying to recover. Fleischer calls it "a rather involved plot, but it's a cute story with a beginning, middle and an end.

"This cartoon's charm is in its execution. The Colossal Pictures people are tremendously talented. They re-

(continued on page 66)

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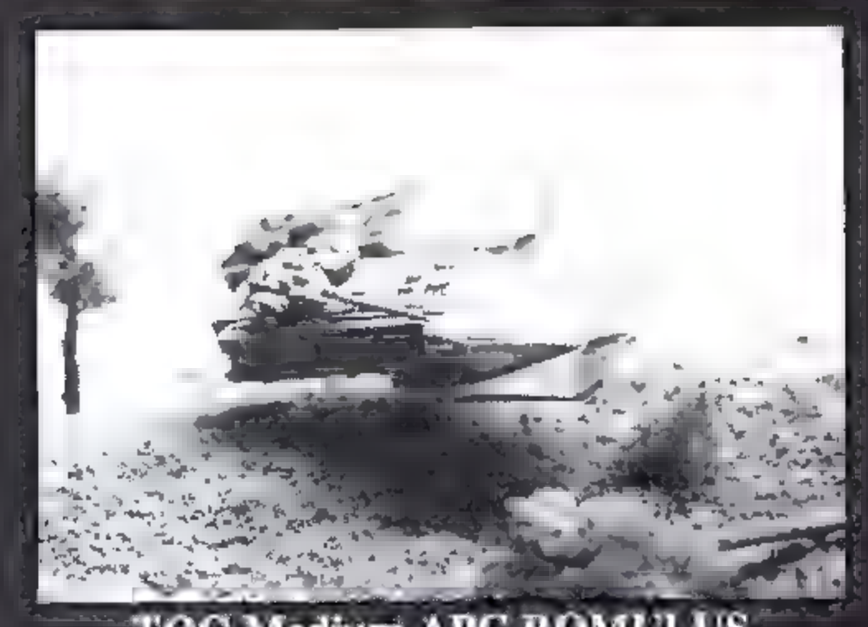

TOG Medium APC ROMULUS

TOG Light APC LUPIS

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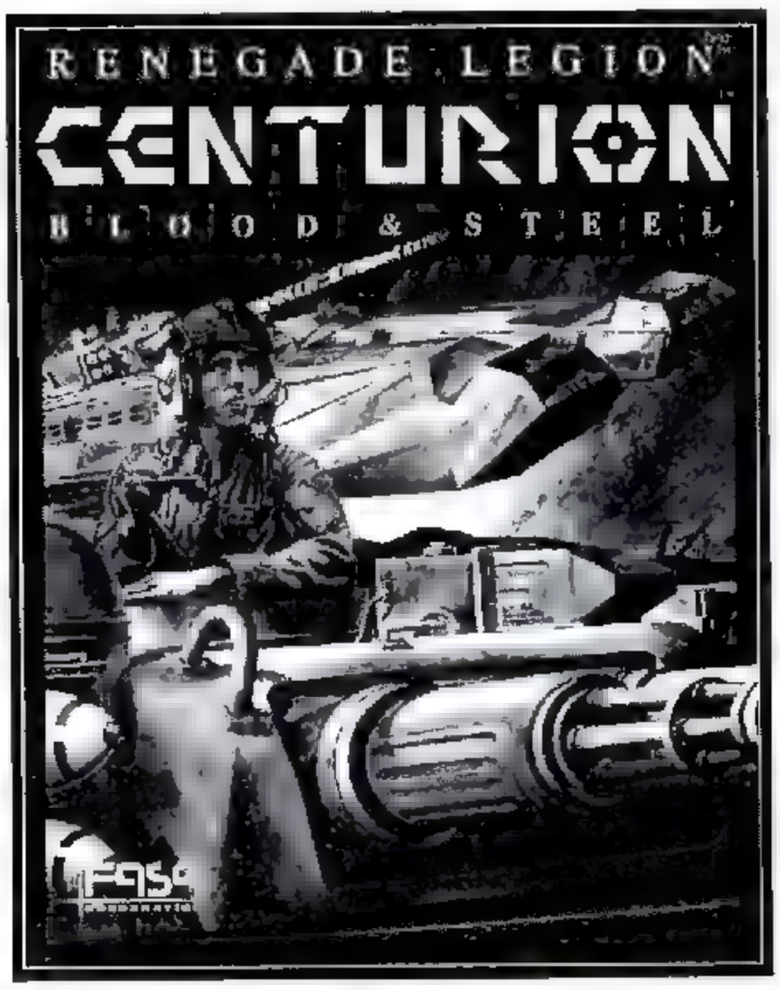

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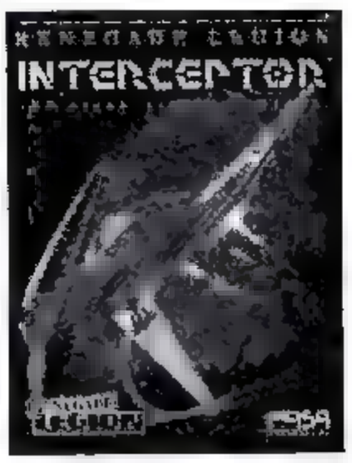

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High speed space fighter combat between the Renegades and the forces of TOG in Renegade Legion: Interceptor.

RENEGADE LEGION: CIRCUS IMPERIUM

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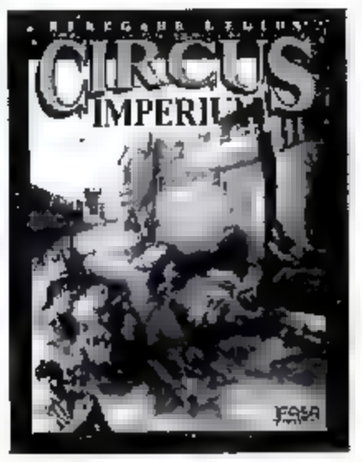

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The Style of Substance

Bill Sienkiewicz draws his own conclusions about the art of comics.

Part Two

By JAMI BERNARD

Last issue, we talked to artist Bill Sienkiewicz about his over-the-edge comic of matricide and possessed kitchen appliances, the four-issue Stray Toasters. *Thanks to that effort, plus his previous work on* New Mutants, Elektra: Assassin, Brought to Light, *and a surfeit of painterly cover-work, many have hailed Sienkiewicz as a trailblazer. Others assail him as a hack.*

But Sienkiewicz perseveres. Trailblazing ain't easy. At times, he has hidden in his sketchbooks, where none dare intrude. At other times, he has returned to inking to recharge his batteries (and, if you've read Stray Toasters, *you know he has definite feelings about batteries, electrical wiring and other forms of automation).*

The deprivations of his early life behind him—he was a self-professed "fat kid" who turned to drawing to escape the taunts of his peers and today looks as slick as his art — he moves now from the over-the-edge Stray Toasters *to a place somewhere on the edge, a place where fractals collide with shopping malls to, with Alan Moore, produce a 12-issue series called* Big Numbers. *Ever travel inside a Nautilus shell? Bill Sienkiewicz has, and he's here to talk about it. This conversation took place at a bar outside the Comic Con in San Diego last summer, where Sienkiewicz was greeted by the crowds like a conquering hero.*

Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1989 Marvel Entertainment Group

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Marston Green d — — — 06 653 0716
Lea Hall d — — — 656 —
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COMICS SCENE: Do you think comics have a responsibility to tackle the big issues?

BILL SIENKIEWICZ: The medium can be a number of things: entertainment, information, moralizing; it all depends on what hat you want to wear.

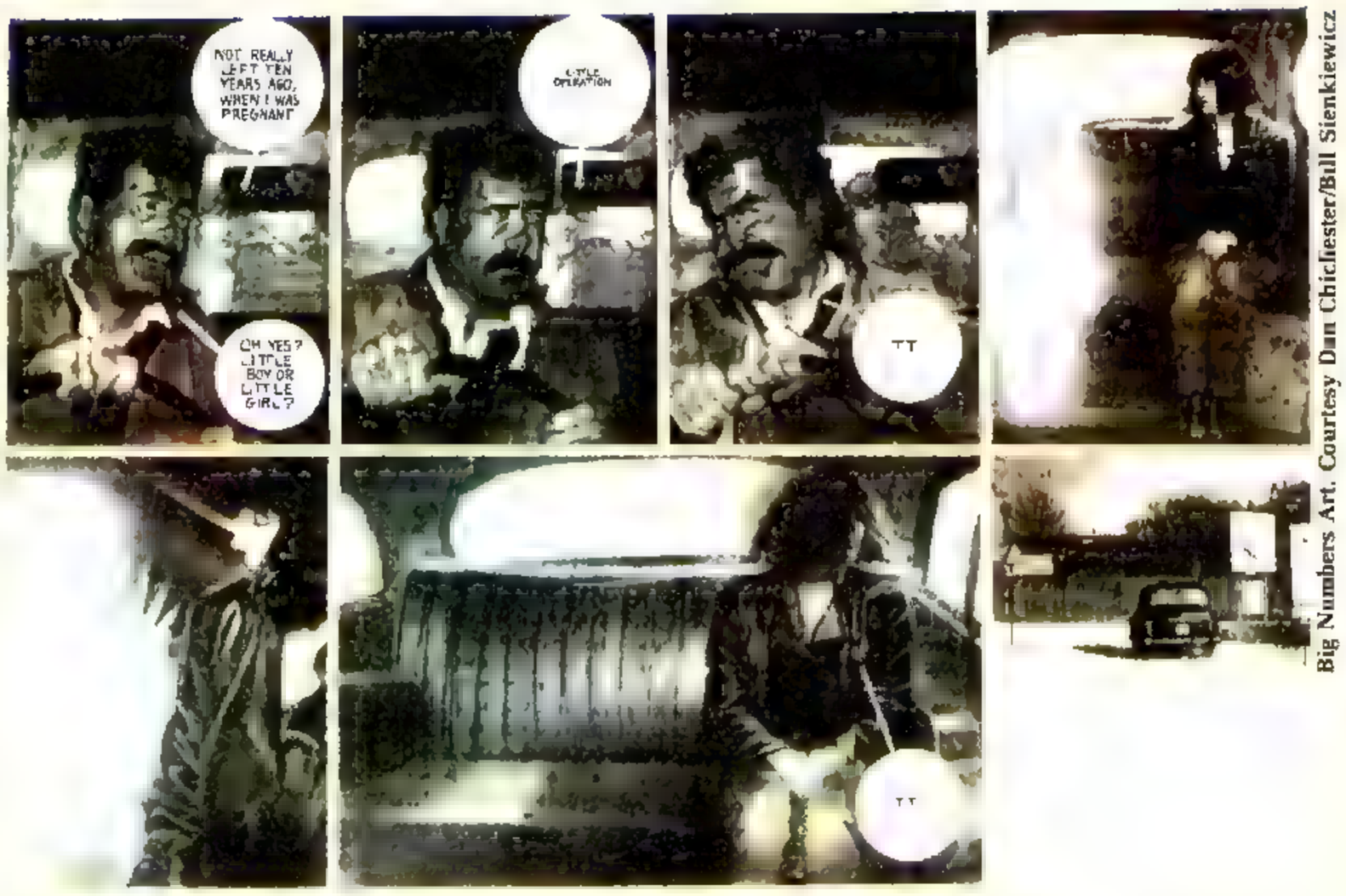
CS: Which hat do you want to wear?

SIENKIEWICZ: It depends on what day it is. *[Laughs.]* You know inform, educate, challenge...it's also important to entertain.

CS: In an interview some years back in the *Comics Journal*, you talked about the importance of having fun. Is that still an ingredient for you?

Welcome to Northampton, England, a small town that's home to *Big Numbers*.

After a decade's absence, Christine Gathercole returns to Northampton, but neither she nor her home may be ready for the American-spawned shopping mall due to arrive after her.



Big Numbers Art. Courtesy Dan Chichester/Bill Sienkiewicz

Notes Bill Sienkiewicz, *Big Numbers* "is about the randomness of life."

SIENKIEWICZ: It's interesting you bring that up because it seems like right now, it has all gotten very serious. Part of me would like to say, "Hey kids, it's comix! Have a good time!" But I also feel compelled to push. Part of me loves the joy of it, the play of it. We were talking earlier about looking for the validation, for respectable work. You get a degree of that. After a while, it's like, "Why didn't I do this in the first place? I *like* this!" It can feel schizophrenic. There are times I feel like a tennis ball and the only court I'm playing on is up here [*taps forehead*]. It doesn't have to do with the company you work for, it has to do with the expression. I think the form is the form. I don't like the business, I like the medium. Of course, that's also part of the Tough Shit Act of 1937—basically, you picked that line of work, so live with it. I love it and wouldn't trade it for the world. It can be really tough sometimes, but it's fulfilling. You have to challenge yourself, because the work is only what we make it. There's a tendency for people to criticize the company, but there's always a certain degree of external censorship that comes with comics. Ultimately, if you allow that to happen, it's your own fault.

CS: You've broken many of your personal boundaries. What's next?

SIENKIEWICZ: The point now is to do what the job really requires, or what the work requires. There's only so long you can sustain a riot; there are times when a whisper is more effective. Next, maybe I'll do something quiet and traditional. *That* would be different. I don't want to function to their drummer. I can only respond to their work.

CS: Is there a dream comic you have in mind?

SIENKIEWICZ: It's percolating.

CS: In retrospect, how do you feel about *Stray Toasters*? Have your perceptions of it changed since it came out?

SIENKIEWICZ: I feel confident about *Stray Toasters*. I know what it is now. Not to be egotistical, but it's a few years ahead of what people are ready for; I think it will come. It will take a

All Art: Bill Sienkiewicz

"I grew up being pigeonholed from the start," Sienkiewicz remarks. "I don't want to be defined by anyone else."

Elektra Art: Trademark & Copyright 1986, 1987 Marvel Entertainment
Art: Copyright 1990 Alan Moore & Bill Sienkiewicz

"When *Elektra* came out," the artist recalls, "it was met with resounding silence. They didn't know if they liked it or not."

Below: "You try to find people with a simpatico point-of-view" to work with, notes Bill Sienkiewicz (right), people like Alan Moore (left), the co-creator of *Big Numbers*

Photo: Mitch Jenkins/Courtesy Bill Sienkiewicz

while to see what it really is. The vocabulary is being created now by different people who are working, like Alan Moore, Frank Miller. We're making it up as we go along, so to speak. When *Elektra* came out [written by Frank Miller], it was met with resounding silence. It took a year for any kind of reaction. They had nothing to describe it with because it was so different, they didn't know if they liked it or not. They weren't sure yet if they liked it because it wasn't mutants, it wasn't the same old stuff.

Toasters is the same thing. I did it in '88, and it was criticized in the industry. It was the first comic I can remember being reviewed with a question mark in *Amazing Heroes*. They just weren't sure. They said it could be brilliant, it could be shit. They reviewed the first installment and based their review on that. That's like reviewing the first half-hour of a two-hour movie. If I were to watch *Something Wild*, by Jonathan Demme, for the first half-hour, well, the movie doesn't work until the point where Ray Liotta goes off the deep end. There's an element of dismissal here, like I'm out in the ozone somewhere, I've lost all sense of reality.

CS: Jonathan Demme does some offbeat work. What other directors do you respond to?

SIENKIEWICZ: I really respond to work like David Lynch's stuff, Luis Bunuel, work in that vein where it's an emotional rambling context, where things aren't explained in A,B,C. Maybe you get A, M and R, and you fill in the rest of the alphabet. I also don't like to give specific answers to things. There's no real good guy or bad guy in *Stray Toasters*. People read it and they have to draw their own conclusion. It's giving them the opportunity to take responsibility for their own reactions, as opposed to manipulating them, like Steven Spielberg. It shows more respect for the reader. It's no glorification, but it's really about communicating. In a way, it's a search for honesty, a baring of soul, character, ideas, emotions. It can be really raw. To have your work dismissed without so much as a second chance is, to me, a real cutting-off-the-nose-to-spite-your-face kind of thing

CS: Would you ever write for children?

SIENKIEWICZ: I would like to do a children's story, as opposed to something like "The Three Bears." Children know when they're being condescended to. The idea is to simplify but not eviscerate or disembowel the work. Not a situation with superheroes and people robbing a bank and jumping into a getaway car with seatbelts traveling at 55 mph. Children can handle some things better than adults. I like the idea of Pablo Piscasso spending his whole life trying to become a child again, to achieve a child-like quality. Imagine having Adolph Hitler say that anybody who says the sky is blue, when he says it's green, should be shot. I remember a conversation I had with a kid. I was looking at his drawing. "Is it a dog? Is it a horse?" I asked. "No." "Well, what is it?" He said, "It's blue." Of course! That's what I want to do with the comics medium. Is it superheroes? No—it's blue. Genre is so...it's a pigeonhole thing. I grew up being pigeonholed from the start. 'He's a Neal Adams imitator. A Ralph Steadman clone." Or someone who is just nuts, doing crazy things. I don't want to be defined by anyone else.

CS: Tell me about your book with Alan Moore.

SIENKIEWICZ: It's called *Big Numbers*, 12 issues, square format, no fewer than 32 pages. It deals with shopping malls and fractals.

CS: Um, fractals?

SIENKIEWICZ: Fractals...Hey, Mark! [Sienkiewicz leans over and calls to Mark Askwith, story editor of the Canadian TV show *Prisoners of Gravity*, seated at a nearby table.

With Herman Melville's book under his arm and First Comics behind him, Slenkiewicz set sail, daring to capture *Moby Dick*.

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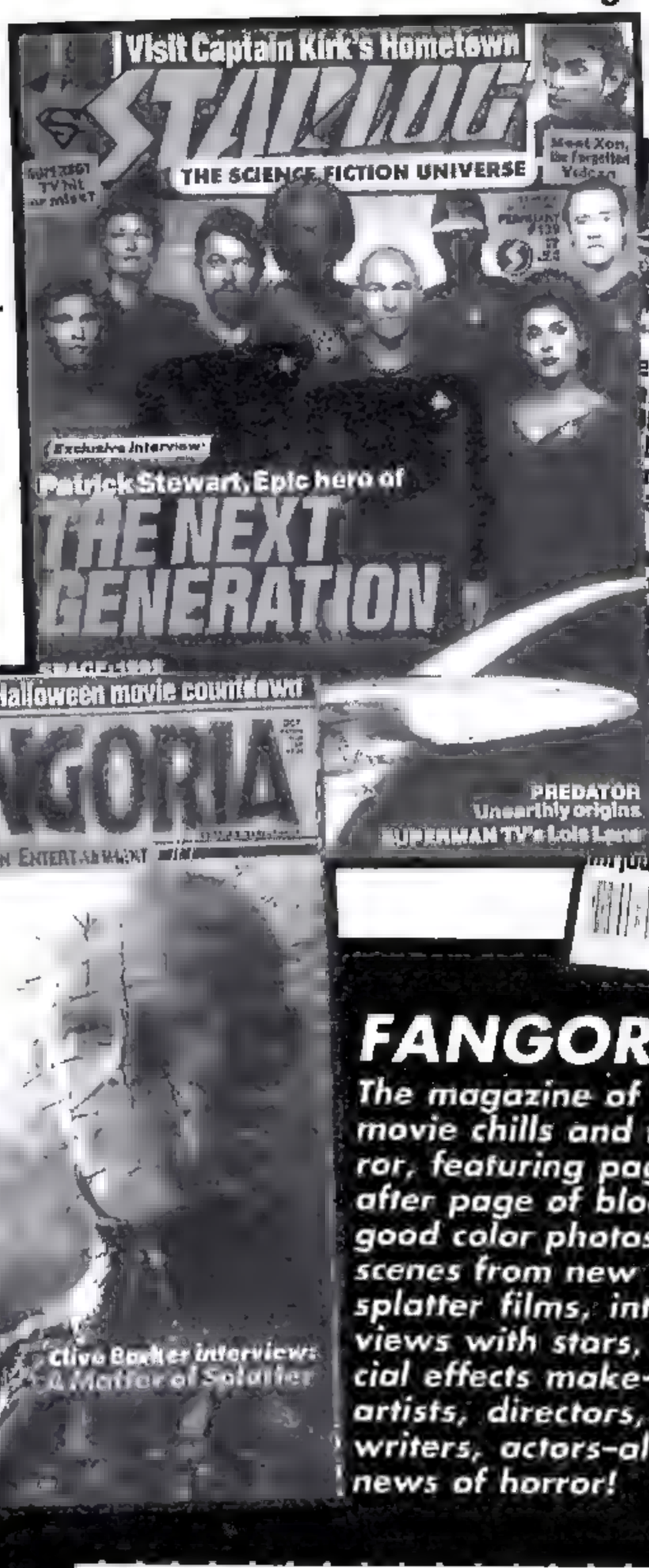

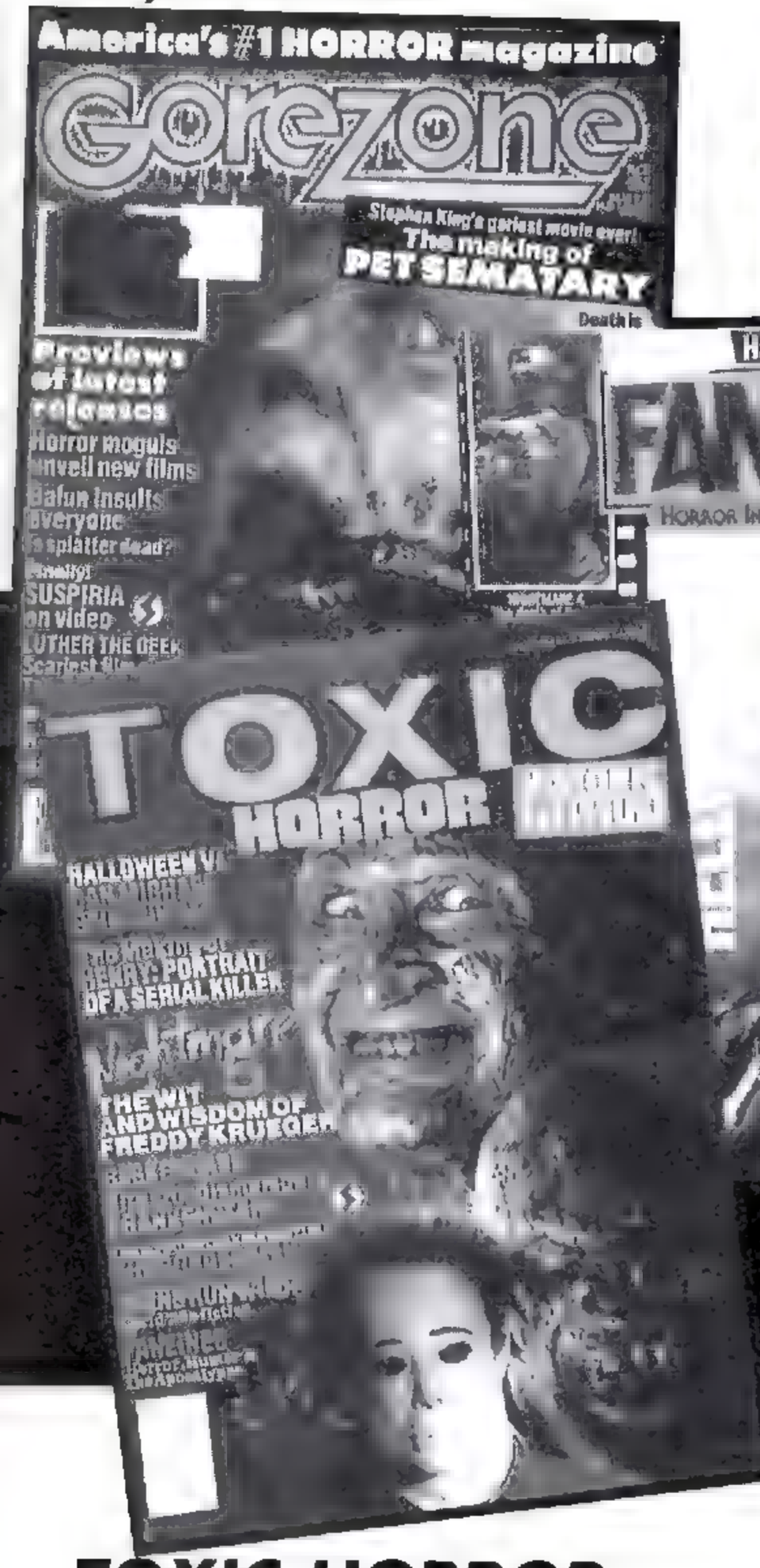

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Ghost Rider

(continued from page 35)

Flag Smasher and Ultimatum. Ghost Rider and the Punisher have similar motivations and objectives in their first meeting, and there will be a confrontation between the two, which will hopefully be resolved. Otherwise, it would mean the end of a high-selling Punisher series if I had Ghost Rider *kill* him."

Mackie has nothing but praise for Saltares' work. "Javier is very much a co-creator on the book," he notes. "The Ghost Rider design was something I loved immediately, and he had the right look for the motorcycle. I'm really pleased with what he has come up with."

The writer believes in putting a great deal of himself into *Ghost Rider*, as he describes Dan Ketch as "a normal 19 r-old growing up in a section of oklyn that's surrounded by cemeter ." Such an environment is not unfa iliar to the scribe, raised in the cemetery-laden area of Cypress Hills, New York.

"When I was growing up and people would ask me where I lived, I would say, 'Cypress Hills,' and they would say, 'Oh, near the cemetery,' " he laughs. "That's all there is throughout that section! I plan on drawing rom that environment quite a bit. After all, when you grow up near a cemetery, there are *always* weird experiences and stories that go around in them. Therefore, a great deal of *Ghost Rider's* mood and stories will take place near or around cemeteries."

While *Ghost Rider* is his first steady book, Saltares art has already been associated with many top-notch artists in the industry. "If my work has a hint of anyone," he says, "it's Otamu [*Akira*] Kashido. You'll see a lot of his speedline effect, which I think works perfectly in the book. I'm also influenced by many other people, like Neal Adams, Gil Kane, Moebius (CS #3) and Mark Texiera (Saltares' brother-in-law)."

Both Howard Mackie and Javier Saltares have high hopes for the title's success. "It's a contemporary book," Mackie says. "Working within the parameters of a motorcycle possessed by a demon and a guy with a flaming skull, I'm trying to make the environments and situations somewhat realistic. *Ghost Rider* will be a very hard-edged, violent book in the vein of *The Punisher*. He's not going to have many scenes in which he ll say, 'I can't, but I must!' He's going to say, 'I know what I'm going to do, and I'm going to do it!' "

Sienkiewicz

(continued from page 64)

Paper Lives, and Moby Dick." And I m doing some other stuff. I would like to try a film, art directing or directing.

CS: Will you eventually leave comics completely?

SIENKIEWICZ: Probably not. The fun of comics is its autonomy. It s hard to get that anywhere else.

CS: Have you thought about doing animation?

SIENKIEWICZ: I love animation. I've done a little. I had some stuff animated by MTV, a series that has been put on hold. Drawing, animating, it's all about communication, just different ways of communicating. It s all music, and it's all fractal.

CS: Fractals seem important to you. When did you first get into the subject?

SIENKIEWICZ: I got into it two years ago. *Big Numbers* was originally going to be called *The Mandelbrot Set* [under which title Moore first discussed it in CS #4]. Benoit Mandelbrot is one of the more avant garde proponents of it. There are other fractals and series and sets of numbers, like the Julia Set. Benoit felt the scientific community viewed it with such suspicion as an unproven theory. It's almost like quantum physics, the potential of a possibility of a problem of a potential of something happening. Any popularization in pop culture could be taken as further proof of its invalidity, so out of respect for Mandelbrot, we changed the title.

CS: With all your creative license, why do you still do inking on occasion?

SIENKIEWICZ: Inking is simply a motor function. After I did *Brought to Light* and *Stray Toasters*, work that required incredible emotional input and working with my hands, inking was like watching grandmother sit and crochet on a moving train. I really wanted to do something that required no thought, go on auto-pilot, to recharge my batteries. I get bored easily. It s necessary to regenerate the batteries.

CS: For a former pudge, you look like you could get into the trendiest club—the European clothes, the earring, a sort of hipper-than-thou look.

SIENKIEWICZ: [*Laughs.*] I was born in Blakely, Pennsylvania, a suburb of a suburb of Scranton. I was raised in New Jersey farm country. I knew that John Deere was tractors, and I was pretty sure Norman Rockwell was a competitor. "What kind of tractors did he put out?" That's where I started. No matter how I look, there's a country boy in me still.

Fleischer

(continued from page 59)

ally studied the Fleischer technique. This cartoon will look like one of the old Fleischer cartoons. It will be fully animated and full of all the classic touches from those cartoons, with music and tongue-in-cheek humor and inanimate objects entering into the action in a very surreal manner. Nobody s doing this kind of animation on TV anymore."

The TV special, which will coincide with a merchandising blitz by King Features—Betty's face will be plastered on several new items, including high-fashion sneakers, a line of clothing and a watch with eyes that move back and forth—will be capped by a birthday party at New York's Hard Rock Cafe, where "Minnie the Moocher" himself, Cab Calloway (who performed as a rotoscoped ghost walrus in the cartoon of the same name), will perform, along with other jazz greats.

Max Fleischer's cartoons explored the darker side of human behavior—one writer described them as "pure sensation—hot jazz and cheesecake, electric chair gags and tours of Hell." But while his cartoons may have been violent, surreal, hysterical and brimming with eroticism, Max was nothing like his screen works, Richard Fleischer says.

"It's very evident, particularly in the surrealistic cartoons he made, that he delighted in exploring man's dark side. I don't think my father was a great analyst, but he was certainly aware of that kind of thing, and he gave his animators free reign to explore it. But none of those words would apply to my father, the man. He was quite the opposite. He was a very quiet man. He knew exactly what he wanted."

Fleischer beams with pride when he considers that his father had a hand in creating an American legend. "My father was a great, great man. He was also a very funny man. He saw humor in everything. He was very accomplished, even though he never had a formal education. There's no question in my mind that he was a genius, and I don't use that term lightly. He understood chemistry, physics and art, he was a wonderful painter and sculptor, he even wrote a nature book. He has over 100 patents, everything from a portable air conditioner to a wingless aircraft. And through it all, he was a wonderful father, a very loving man.

"I'm very proud of his accomplishments, and I'm very proud to be his son."

Comic Screen

These characters are being developed for other media. *All* projects are live-action unless specified. Those marked by an asterisk have changed status since last listing. **Attn. all pros:** Clarifications & other info to be added to this list are cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016.

*** The Addams Family.** Film. Orion Pictures. Cher *may* play Morticia.

The Adolescent Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters. Animated series. Rankin-Bass, producers.

*** The Adventures of Pico and Columbus.** Animated feature from Bavaria Film. Phil Nibbelink, Directing Animator; Scott Santoro, Special FX. In production for Columbus Quintacentennial.

The Airtight Garage. Animated film of Moebius saga. Moscow's Soyuzmultfilm Studios, North American Trading Co. & Starwatcher Graphics, co-producers. Script: Randy Lofficier. In production.

The American. Film. Joel Silver, producer. Script: Mark Verheiden.

American Flagg! Film.

*** Annie.** Separate film & stage musical sequels. Film to shoot April 1990. Lewis Gilbert, director. Musical *Annie II: Miss Hannigan's Revenge* reteams creators Charles Strouse, Tom Meehan & Martin Charnin. Hannigan: Dorothy Loudon. Warbucks: Harve Presnell. Opens March on Broadway.

Ant-Man. Film.

*** Archie.** Film, *Archie & Veronica*. Targeted for summer 1991. Warner Bros. Script: Jeff Boam. Joel Schumacher, director. Archie: Corey Haim. Also NBC TV movie. DIC. Script: David Cohen, Roger Shulman. Exec producers: Tom Patchett, Andy Heyward.

Arzach. Film of Moebius hero. Kirk Thatcher, producer.

The Avengers. Film. John Steed. Script: Sam Hamm.

Babar. 52 half-hour shows air on HBO. Nelvana, producers.

*** Batman.** Sequels planned. Cast, director TBA. Script: Sam Hamm. Villain will *not* be the Penguin.

Beetle Bailey. Film. Also animated TV special. Script: Hank Saroyan.

*** Beetlejuice.** Animated Saturday a.m. series airs on ABC. Episodes being issued on video.

Blackhawk. Film.

Blade. Film based on *Tomb of Dracula* character. Script: Lee Goldberg & William Rabkin.

Blondie. CBS animated special.

James Bond. Animated series, *Adventures of James Bond Jr.*

COMICS REPORTER

What about a *Green Hornet* movie? It *almost* happened years ago.

The Unmade Green Hornet Movie

In 1982, following the cancellation of *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, *Outer Limits* creator Leslie Stevens was brought together with Stan Weston, owner of the rights to the Green Hornet, to write a script on speculation for a proposed Hornet feature. "It was a satirical script," recalls Stevens, "a funny version of the Green Hornet. I've been trying to talk Bob Wagner into doing it."

The plot for the film concerned aliens who land offshore somewhere near Santa Monica Bay in California. "Up out of the tide come these evil-looking fluorescent monsters with bell jars on their heads and skull faces," continues Stevens. "Kato, Green Hornet's assistant, happens to be up on the cliffs at the time with his girl friend and reports this unusual activity to the Green Hornet. It's the story of an alien invasion with the Green Hornet and his crew trying to stop it."

Stevens' script mixed tongue-in-cheek humor, martial arts, extraterrestrials and outlandish weaponry (gizmos like "pneumatic knuckles" and "electro-whips") while presenting the Green Hornet as a "guy who honestly can't live up to being a superhero—he's just too human. It's reducing him to a nervous wreck." This Green Hornet is so human, in fact, that he does something no self-respecting hero would ever do: He falls in love with Kato's sweetheart.

Stevens reasons that the film probably never materialized because it went against the form of the genre so forcefully. "It's one of those things I never took that seriously. But if it ever did get made, I felt it ought to be done with an actor who is capable of playing light, suave roles. The script got shopped around, but it died."

—Kyle Counts

Green Hornet Art: Jeff Butler/David Mowry/Copyright 1990 Now Comics

*** Betty Boop.** Animated half-hour special, *Betty Boop's Hollywood Mystery*, airs on CBS soon. Film. Pierre Spengler, producer. Richard Fleischer, director. (see article).

*** Brenda Starr, Reporter.** Film unspooling on airlines. Theatrical release uncertain.

Bugs Bunny. New syndicated animated series teaming Steven Spielberg & Warner stars young Warner characters, *Tiny Tunes*. Debuts fall '90.

*** Bullwinkle.** *Boris & Natasha*, a live-action comedy, with Sally Kellerman & Dave Thomas. Script: Charles Fradin. Charles Martin-Smith, director. Out April.

*** Captain America.** Film. Script: Stephen Tolkin. Albert Pyun, director. Captain America: Matt Salinger. Out April. (see article).

Cathy. Animated TV specials on CBS. TV ads now running.

*** Charlie Chan.** Film. Chan: B.D. Wong. Fred Levinson, director. Gene Kirkwood, John Hyde, producers.

Chicken Man. Animated series based on Dick Orkin's '70s radio spoof series. Calico.

Chip & Dale. Animated series, *Rescue Rangers*, airs on Disney Channel & in syndication. Animated film due 1991.

Conan. Film. *Conan III* "announced" by Conan Licensing.

Cracked. Superhero parody movie in development.

Deathlok. Film.

*** Delta Tenn.** TV movie. Shannon Tweed stars. Touchstone TV for NBC. Despite earlier report, not yet shot.

Dick Tracy. Film. Touchstone. Warren Beatty, director & star. June '90 release. Sequel planned.

DNAgents. Film. UA.

Doc Savage. Film.

Dr. Strange. Film. Script: Bob Gale. Looking for studio. Separate TV movie discussed.

Droopy. Will co-star with son Dribble in *Tom & Jerry Kids*, HB animated series for TBS.

Evangeline. Film. Funnybook Films.

Fantastic Four. Film. Neue Constantin. Bernard Eichinger, producer.

The Far Side. Film. Alan Rudolph, director. Shopping for studio.

Felix the Cat. Animated film. Produced, still no release.

The Fish Police. Animated series.

*** The Flash.** Film. Guber-Peters. CBS is discussing a TV series to use the Barry Allen Flash.

*** The Flintstones.** Film. Fred: John Goodman. Now at Universal with Amblin Entertainment.

*** Fu Manchu.** Film. *Secret of Fu Manchu*. David Carradine stars.

Garfield. Saturday a.m. series, *Garfield & Friends*, on CBS.

*** Ghost Rider.** Film. New Line Cinema.

*** The Green Hornet.** Film. Now at Universal.

Green Lantern. Film. Joel Silver, producer. Being written.

*** Grimjack.** Film.

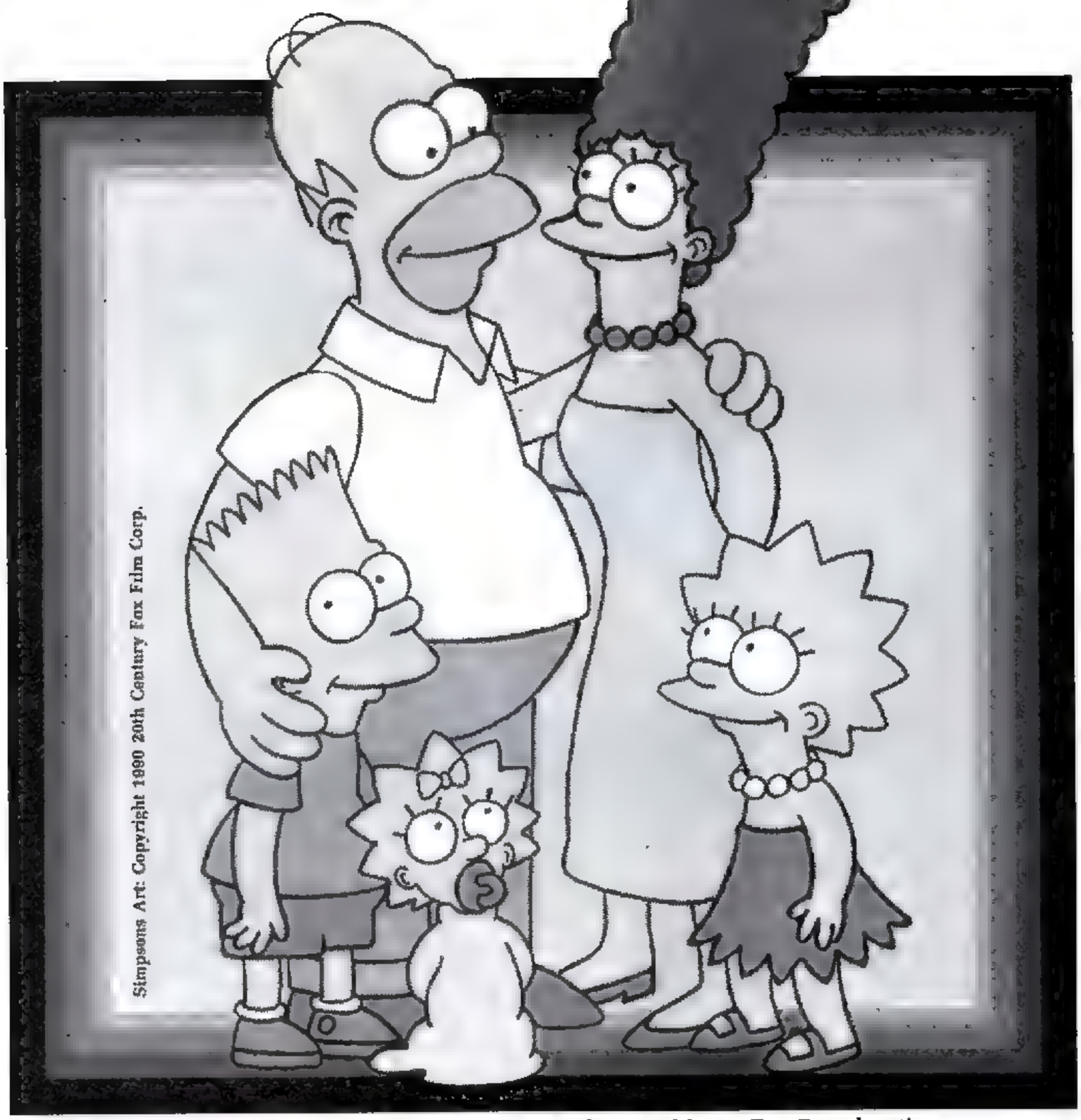
Gumby. Film.

He-Man. *New Adventures of He-Man*, a 65-episode series, due fall 1990. LBS Communications.

Honkytonk Sue. Film. Optioned by Goldie Hawn.

*** The Incredible Hulk.** New NBC TV movie, *The Death of the Incredible Hulk*. Bill Bixby, director (see article).

*** Inspector Gadget.** Live-action



The Simpsons celebrate the joys of domestic tranquility weekly on Fox Broadcasting.

half-hour TV series based on animated character. DIC. For Family Channel.

* **Iron Man**. Film.

The Jetsons. Animated film. HB/Universal. Out June 1990.

* **Jonny Quest**. Film. Now at Universal.

* **Judge Dredd**. Film. Script: Howard Chaykin. Charles Lippincott, producer.

Justice League. TV mini-series (4 hours). NBC.

Kaptain Keen & Ko. Planned animated series. Rankin-Bass.

Li'l Abner. Live-action TV series. Max & Michaeline Keller, producers. Dave Bell & Herbert Krosney, producers, plan animated show & musical.

Little Nemo in Slumberland. Animated film. TMS Ent.

* **The Lone Ranger**. Syndicated half-hour TV series planned to debut in fall 1990. Currently being sold to TV stations *without* a pilot. Also separate live-action film. John Landis, director. Universal.

Lone Wolf & Cub. Film. Edward Pressman, producer. Script: Bill Wisher.

MacDoodle Street. Film. Columbia. Based on Mark Alan Stamaty's *Village Voice* strip.

* **MAD Magazine**. CBS special. HB. Still unfinished. May *never* air.

Mai the Psychic Girl. Film. Writer/producer Larry Wilson. Co-producer: Walter Hill. Carolco.

* **Mandrake**. Film. Italy's Pentafilm says it has rights now.

* **The Mask**. Film.

* **Mickey Mouse**. Animated featurette "The Prince & the Pauper" due out fall '90.

Mr. Jigsaw. Ron Fortier-Gary Kato character optioned for animation by Rankin-Bass.

Mr. Magoo. Film. Steven Tisch, producer. Also animated film with niece, Megan Magoo.

Mr. X. Film. Jim Cash & Jack Epps, producers.

My Secret Identity. Syndicated sitcom with Ultraman airing.

Nancy. *Nancy The Movie*. Peter Muller, producer.

Negative Man. New superhero created by Bob Kane. Live-action series. Nelvana.

Neil the Horse. Animation/live-action project.

Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. Film. Stephen Herek, director. Script: Greg Pruss.

Joe Palooka. Musical.

The Phantom. Film. Bruce Sherlock, Peter Sjoquist, John Torv, Rodney Price, producers. Script: Ken Shadie. *Phantom* creator Lee Falk, consultant. Joel Schumacher *may* direct.

* **Plastic Man**. Film. Script: Joel Silver, producer. Script: Steven de Souza & David Peoples.

The Shadow. Film. Script: Howard Franklin. Martin Bregman, producer.

* **The She-Hulk**. Plan to introduce her in a Hulk TV movie abandoned.

* **The Simpsons**. Animated series airs on FBC featuring Matt Groening's characters.

* **Spider-Man**. Film. Stephen Herek, director. Due X-mas '90. Animated *Marvel Universe* segment continues. A live-action TV series is contemplated for '91.

Sub-Mariner. Film.

Superboy. Syndicated TV series now airing.

Superman. *Superman V???*

Swamp Thing. Animated series.

* **Tales from the Crypt**. HBO series. 19 new episodes.

* **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**. Animated series in syndication. Live-action film due March '90. Steve Barron, director. Script: Bobby Herbeck & Todd W. Langen. (see article.)

* **Terry & the Pirates**. Film. Script: Jules Feiffer. Gene Kirkwood, John Hyde, producers. Stan Weston, exec producer. Sylvester Stallone *may* star. Ridley Scott says "it's news to him" that he might direct.

Thor. Animated series.

Time Beavers. Animated TV series. Kushner-Locke.

Tin-Tin. Film. Amblin.

Tom & Jerry. Film. New animated 13-episode *Tom & Jerry Kids* for TBS. Due fall '90.

Trouble with Girls. Film. 20th Century Fox & Funnybook Films. Script: Will Jacobs & Gerard Jones. Matt Pepler, Neal Tabachnick, producers.

* **Vampirella**. Film. Writer/director Jim Wynorski has now obtained rights. Plans two films to shoot back-to-back.

V for Vendetta. Film. Warner.

WARP. Film. Script: Mark Victor & Michael Grais, producers.

* **Watchmen**. Film. Script: Sam Hamm. Joel Silver, producer. 20th Century Fox.

Wizard of Id. Film. Script: Steven de Souza, Dana Olsen. David & Jerry Zucker to direct.

Wolverine. Film. Would end with character joining X-Men.

Wonder Woman. TV series.

Zen, Intergalactic Ninja. Film. Animated series. Surge Licensing. Scripts: Steven Stern. Mark Freedman, producer.

Zippyvision. Film. Script: Bill Griffith & Diane Noomin. Features Zippy the Pinhead.

Zorro. Half-hour TV series airing on Family Channel. Zorro: Duncan Regehr.

Charles Gale. Warner Bros. Possible star: Pee-wee Herman.

The Prowler. Film. Funnybook Films.

The Punisher. Film. Dolph Lundgren stars. Mark Goldblatt, director. Release delayed.

Radio Boy. Animated. Rankin-Bass.

Reid Fleming, World's Toughest Milkman. Film. *May* star Jim Belushi. Script: creator David Boswell. Matt Weisman, Joseph Loeb II, producers.

Richie Rich. Film. Fred Savage *may* star. Joel Silver, John Davis, producers. Warner Bros.

* **RoboCop**. Sequel. Script: Frank Miller & Walon Green. Irv Kershner, director. Peter Weller & Nancy Allen return. Due out July. Animated *Marvel Universe* may spin off solo Robo series.

The Rocketeer. Film. Disney. Bill Dear, director. Script: Danny Bilson & Paul De Meo.

Roger Rabbit. Short, "Rollercoaster Rabbit," next up. Other shorts planned: "Hare in My Soup", "Beach Blanket Bunny", "Cleaned & Impressed."

Sally Forth. Universal sitcom.

Secret Agent X-9. Animated film.

Sgt. Preston of the Yukon. TV revival projected.

Sgt. Rock. Film. Rock: Bruce Willis. John McTiernan, director.

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